

And There Were Voices

An Abraham Lincoln Play in Three Acts

By Robert Knipe

Acting Edition



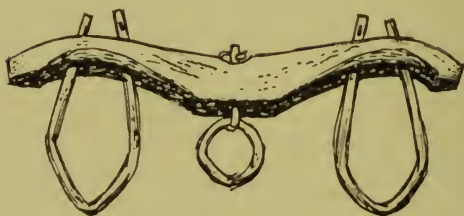
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LINCOLN ROOM



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And There Were Voices

A Play in Three Acts
Concerning the First Years in Springfield,
Illinois, in the Life of Abraham Lincoln

By ROBERT KNIPE

BAKER'S PLAYS

*178 Tremont Street
Boston, Mass.*

and

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AND THERE WERE VOICES

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For Mabel Hoyle

THE PREFACE

In creative literature dealing with historical data, a two-fold responsibility devolves upon the author. He must present factual matter with reasonable accuracy, and he must vitally recreate personality and spiritual conflicts whose final resolutions have long ago become actualities known to every layman.

The first responsibility is admittedly a light one. Indeed, there is an advantage when a writer, hard up for plot matter, approaches a series of events already definite in factual history. The second assignment, however, presents a very real challenge, and too often the unwary chronicler falls into the obvious traps of unnatural prophecy and conventional characterization.

Fully aware of these pitfalls, the author of "And There Were Voices" offers in his play one more struggle with the challenge of Abraham Lincoln. Here, however, is no Lincoln deified out of recognition, but an affectionate picture of a man—awkward, lazy, unsure, plagued by mundane worry—yet withal, a man heroic because of his very humanity.

It is hoped that this simple interpretation of a man-sized Lincoln—a Lincoln of comprehensible stature, may appeal to little theatre groups who have heretofore felt historical and biographical drama too grandiose for their consideration.

M. H.

And There Were Voices

CAST OF CHARACTERS

BILLY HERNDON.
OLD RIP.
JUDGE STUART.
NINIAN EDWARDS.
DR. RICHARD ELLIOT.
ABRAHAM LINCOLN.
JOSHUA SPEED.
SISTER BESSIE ARMSTRONG.
MATILDA ARMSTRONG.
MARY TODD.
ELIZABETH TODD EDWARDS.
FRANCES TODD.
POTTER ELDRED.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

With the exception of one scene, the entire action of the play takes place in the law office of Stuart and Lincoln, 4 Hoffman's Row, upstairs, directly over the courtroom, in Springfield, Illinois.

ACT I—SCENE 1: March, 1837. Afternoon.
SCENE 2: Several months later.

ACT II—SCENE 1: Two months after the preceding scene.
SCENE 2: The next day. Three-thirty o'clock in the afternoon.
SCENE 3: The courtroom beneath Lincoln's office. Immediately following the preceding scene. See note p. 8.

SCENE 4: The office again. The action is continuous.

ACT III—SCENE 1: More than a year after the preceding scene. The middle of a bleak, winter morning.

SCENE 2: Many weeks later. Evening.

NOTE: This play is actually a one-set play, Scene 3 of Act II being played before the Curtain, in a spot-lighted area of the stage.

PRODUCTION NOTES

See pps. 119-125.

“He was a paradox, so easy to see through with his funny street-corner stories, and so baffling when his face settled into granitic calm and there came into the depths of his eyes the shadows of a burning he had been through, and he was a changed man keeping to himself the gray mystery of the change.”

CARL SANDBURG.

STAGE DIAGRAM



The law office of Stuart and Lincoln.

For details of scene plot see pps. 119-120.

And There Were Voices

ACT I

SCENE I.—*The law office of Stuart and Lincoln, 4 Hoffman's Row, upstairs, directly over the courtroom, in Springfield, Illinois. There is no chair in front of the table at R. The office is in the process of being cleaned, and papers are strewn about on the desk at L. There is a wooden barrel at L. C.*

TIME.—*March, 1837. Afternoon.*

(*At rise of Curtain: The door at R. is open, and BILLY HERNDON is discovered, tacking up a black tin sign, reading, in white letters, "J. T. Stuart & A. Lincoln, Atty's & Counsellors at Law." BILLY is about twenty or twenty-one. He is an enthusiastic abolitionist, being fired with the desire to right what he believes to be a great wrong. He is of medium height, and slightly built. Inclined to be quick and nervous in his speech and movements, there is a suggestion that he may be over-fond of strong drink. He is in his shirt sleeves, his dark, well-worn frock coat being thrown on the couch. He is well-dressed, but conservatively so. As the curtain opens full, he stands back and appraises his handiwork. OLD RIP is standing L. in front of the couch, dusting, with his blue bandanna handkerchief, the great law books stacked on the rickety shelves. RIP is a quiet, white-haired man, looking about sixty, but in reality being only about forty or a little more. He is soft spoken and inclined to vagueness. All he is certain of is the desire to return to his Nancy, but he doesn't know*

where she is. He is a victim of amnesia. He is dressed in an old calico shirt, open at the throat, an old short black coat, and worn trousers held up by suspenders, and wears this throughout the play. After BILLY finishes, there is a slight pause. Then JUDGE STUART'S VOICE is heard calling from off R.)

STUART'S VOICE.

(Off.) Give me a hand with this chair, Billy! These stairs are steep!

BILLY.

Yes, sir! [He drops his hammer and exits, door R.]

STUART'S VOICE.

Take it easy, boy. . . . There we are! (They enter the office, holding between them a wooden armchair, quite new, which they deposit before the table at R. This chair becomes chair A in the stage directions. STUART wipes his forehead with his handkerchief, puffs, and sits down in chair A. He is a short, fat, lazy little man of about sixty-five, not too well educated, as one can tell from his speech, but shrewd all the same. He wears a long frock coat and light trousers, strapped under his shoes, and a startling vest. Also a high collar and full tie. He has a light beaver hat which is hanging on one of the hat pegs.) Whew! Warm for this time of year! Well, that job's done! Got the sign up, Billy?

BILLY.

Yes, sir. Looks good, too. (He crosses L. to the desk, and begins tearing up old papers stacked there, and throwing the scraps into the barrel.)

(STUART turns, inspects the sign, and nods his approval.)

RIP.

(Looking about.) The whole place looks good, Judge, I think. Just shows what a little work can do. "Never be afraid of work." That's my motto.

STUART.

I ain't exactly afraid of physical labor, Rip. I just

somehow don't *cotton* to it.—Here, don't be dusting with your handkerchief —— Where's that cloth, Billy?

RIP.

It don't matter, Judge. I use this for most everything—even to clean my boots with —— When I clean 'em.

BILLY.

First time I've seen the top of this desk in a long time, Judge.

STUART.

Got to get it freshened up. Want Abe to have a right good start.

BILLY.

Reckon we can fix the place up to suit him?

STUART.

Oh, Abe won't kick none. He ain't the kicking sort, I reckon, and besides, he's lived most of his life in a one-room log cabin. He won't be pernicky.

RIP.

(*Still dusting.*) How long's he going to stay, Judge?

STUART.

Till he feels like moving on, most likely. Judge Bowling Green wrote and asked would I like a young, intelligent fellow to kind of run things for me while I'm campaigning for Congress, and I said sure.

BILLY.

(*Busy with the papers.*) This Lincoln a sure-enough lawyer?

STUART.

He's a lawyer all right, though he never set up to practice none. He's been sitting with the Legislature over in Vandalia for two, three years. Bowling said he was good. That's enough for me.

RIP.

Who'd you say? Bowling? Bowling Green? The

name strikes me mighty familiar somehow . . . but I don't . . . don't remember him. . . .

BILLY.

You know him all right, Rip. He come here from New Salem not a month ago. You was talking to him right here in the office.

RIP.

(*Vaguely.*) Was I? Can't remember it. . . . Can't remember nothing any more.

STUART.

Go on with you, Rip! You're getting better all the time!

RIP.

(*Shaking his head despondently.*) No, I ain't! Some part of my mind's still all black. Only thing I can remember is Nancy. . . . I've got to be getting back to her. . . .

STUART.

You'll get back to her, Rip. Don't worry.

RIP.

Sometimes I think I will—I'm sure of it. And sometimes I feel I'll never see her again. . . .

BILLY.

(*Reassuringly.*) She's waiting for you, Rip. She knows you'll come.

RIP.

Yes, she knows. . . . (*He nods. Then a little smile breaks over his face.*) My . . . my, she's pretty . . . pretty's a picture. . . . (*He stands looking into space until STUART speaks*)

STUART.

(*Seeing that BILLY is carefully putting aside some papers to save.*) What's that you're saving, Billy? I told you to throw the whole kaboodle away.

BILLY.

Abolitionist pamphlets I gave you, Judge—the ones by Lovejoy.

STUART.

(With a sweeping wave of his arm.) Throw 'em out, Billy! They ain't good for nothing but to stir up trouble where there's enough trouble already.

BILLY.

Yes, sir. *(He reluctantly tears them up and throws the scraps in the barrel.)*

STUART.

And don't go getting Abe Lincoln a whole pile of that fire-eating nonsense to read, because he won't care two shakes for the stuff. And he's not likely to be much interested in your rip-snorting, long-winded speeches neither, so save your breath, Billy, and don't make any.

BILLY.

(Intensely.) I'm only doing what I can to right the greatest wrong in the history of the country, Judge. That negroes should live in bondage in a country that calls itself a democracy is a crime we'll some day have to answer for!

STUART.

Well, I hope I'm not around when you do the answering, Billy, because you'll take an ungodly long time at it, if I know you. Tote the barrel down if you got all those papers tore up.

BILLY.

Yes, sir. *(Heaves up the barrel, and exits with it, door R.)*

STUART.

(Who has been doing nothing.) Whew! *That's* a good job done!

RIP.

(Putting in place the last book.) Reckon these books

are all in good shape, Judge. Mighty thick books, ain't they? What's in 'em all?

STUART.

Been so long since I read 'em, Rip, I couldn't hardly tell you.

(*Enter NINIAN EDWARDS and DR. RICHARD ELLIOT, door R. EDWARDS is a dignified man of middle age, well set up, and of medium height. In the presence of his rather overbearing wife, he generally is resigned. He is quite wealthy, and is elegantly dressed in a dark frock coat, light trousers, fancy silk vest, ruffled shirt, tall beaver and highly polished shoes. He carries a walking stick. ELLIOT is a young man, honest, sincere, and a promising doctor. He is dressed in the same fashion as EDWARDS, but not so expensively, and he carries no stick.*)

EDWARDS.

Hello, Judge; afternoon, Rip.

STUART.

Howdy, gentlemen. Come on in and set down. Has Lincoln shown up yet, do you know?

EDWARDS.

(*He hangs up his hat and sits in chair c.*) He's at Josh Speed's store. He'll be along if you give him time. Abe never hurries much.

ELLIOT.

How are you today, Rip? Been having any of those pains in your head?

RIP.

No. No, I'm all right today, Doctor Dick. I'm all right. (*He runs his hand gingerly through his white hair.*) If I could just get back to her, I'd be a new man, that I would. I know it. If I could just get back to her . . . back to her . . .

ELLIOT.

(*He goes to him. Urgently.*) Where is she, Rip? You remember her name. You were on your way to her. But try to think where you were going.

RIP.

(*He tries to think, but shakes his head wearily.*) I can't think, Doctor Dick. I've tried . . . I can't think . . . it won't come. . . . (*He is silent for a moment, staring into space. Then . . .*) If you don't want me no more, Judge, I'll run along to Mrs. Armstrong's and do up a little work she's got for me.

STUART.

All right, Rip. Here. (*He passes him some coins.*)

RIP.

(*Crossing and taking them.*) Thank you, Judge. . . .
'Day, gentlemen. . . . [*He exits door R.*]

EDWARDS.

(*As they look after him.*) Poor fellow. His mind's been in a muddle ever since they picked him up wandering on the prairie seven years ago.

ELLIOT.

(*Coming down L. Thoughtfully.*) If I could only find out what happened, I might be able to do something for him.

EDWARDS.

We don't any of us know much about it, Dick. Elisha Armstrong came across him just roaming around lost and sick. Brought him home and nursed him back to health. Now he's living by himself in a little house not far from the river. People keep their eye on him, and give him little jobs to do here and there. He's pretty healthy, but his mind's gone . . . can't remember a thing.

ELLIOT.

I know all that, Ninian. I've heard it from everyone

in Springfield, and it doesn't help me a bit. No one seems to have the information I really want.

STUART.

He talks about this Nancy. Wish we knew who she is.

EDWARDS.

He's constantly racking his brain to remember. It's hard on him. Makes him unhappy all the time.

STUART.

Do you think there's any hope of his getting better, Dick?

ELLIOT.

(*Sitting in chair E.*) I don't know, Judge. It's hard to say. I haven't been in practice long, so I've never really run up against a case exactly like his, but I've read of them. Sometimes the people die without ever remembering their names.

STUART.

The only name Rip knows is this Nancy. Must have been his sweetheart from the way he speaks of her.

EDWARDS.

I don't believe he's so very old, even though his hair's white. Wonder just what his age is?

STUART.

It's hard to tell. I asked him once, but he doesn't remember. I'm right curious to know, though. He looks a good sixty, but he can't be.

EDWARDS.

Why don't you have him come in and clean up regular around the office here for Abe? He'll need someone to pick up after him.

STUART.

Reckon I will. I been thinking of it.

ELLIOT.

Married, is he?

EDWARDS.

Who, Abe? (*Quietly.*) No, she died . . .

STUART.

That was mighty sad about Ann, wasn't it, Ninian? Bowling was telling me. But he says Abe's bearing up pretty well, and even's gone so far as to get interested in another girl, name of Mary Owens.

EDWARDS.

I doubt if Abe'll ever do much in the marrying line.

(*Enter BILLY, door R.*)

BILLY.

'Day, Mr. Edwards, 'day, Doc. Judge, Mr. Speed's coming across the square with the tallest, gangliest fellow I ever did see.

EDWARDS.

(*Laughing.*) I reckon that must be Abe. (*He goes to window.*) Yes, that's him all right.

STUART.

Ah-ha! I'm anxious to meet this young fellow. (*He heaves himself up and goes to window.*) If he's half as good as Bowling Green says he is, he'll be mighty handy to have around. Hum-m . . . he is a tall chap, ain't he? That plug hat don't shorten him up none, either.

(JOSHUA SPEED'S VOICE *comes from off stage R.*)

SPEED'S VOICE.

(*Off.*) Right up here, Lincoln. There's the sign on the door.

LINCOLN'S VOICE.

(*Off.*) Reads mighty nice, don't it?

(*The two are heard in the outer hall, and the men in the office look at the door expectantly. BILLY is by the bench, and EDWARDS and STUART are just below the window, EDWARDS R. of STUART. ELLIOT rises*

and stands by chair E. Enter ABRAHAM LINCOLN and JOSHUA SPEED. LINCOLN is a thin, gangling fellow of twenty-eight years. He stands six feet four inches in height. [If the actor playing the part is not the prescribed height, he may build himself up by inserting lifts in his shoes. He should be, at the very least, six feet tall, and as much over as possible. Also, he should allow his hair to grow long and shaggy.] LINCOLN is gaunt and sad looking, and given to fits of moodiness. He remembers Ann Rutledge. He dresses in black throughout the play, and wears a tall, stovepipe hat. SPEED is a heavy-set, robust fellow with light, bushy hair. He's about twenty-five, good-natured and kindly, and becomes one of LINCOLN's fast friends. He wears his clothes—common, everyday clothes, consisting of jacket, old vest, shirt, trousers—carelessly.)

EDWARDS.

Hello there, Abe. Come in.

STUART.

(Heartily.) Hello, Lincoln! I'm Stuart. Glad you've come! *(He goes to him and they shake hands.)*

LINCOLN.

How de do, Judge Stuart. I'm glad to meet you. Bowling Green's been telling me a heap of things about you.

STUART.

Leave it to old Bowling! Hope he ain't been talking scandal about me!

LINCOLN.

(Smiling.) No fear of that.

STUART.

(Turning to BILLY, who has moved to L. beside EDWARDS.) This here's Billy Herndon, Lincoln. Clerk in Josh's store. He's been giving me a hand in making the place look presentable for you. I tell you, we been doing some digging, ain't we, Billy?

LINCOLN.

(*Shaking hands with BILLY.*) Pleased to know you, Billy. The office sure looks good, but give me about a week anywhere, and I'm badly in need of an extra room for the overflow.

STUART.

Billy comes in now and then and copies letters for me. Kind of thinks he'd like to take up law.

LINCOLN.

Better let me tackle it first, Billy, and if I survive, you can try your hand at it.

STUART.

Billy's a hell-fire abolitionist, ain't you, Billy? Don't let him corner you, Abe, and begin speech-making. Oh, I almost forgot. Here's Doc Elliot waiting to be introduced. Lincoln, Doctor Dick Elliot, Springfield's newest pill-dispenser.

LINCOLN.

Howdy, Dick. The new doctor and the new lawyer had better stick together. We can give each other moral support, and I reckon I'll be needing it. (*Crosses and shakes hands.*)

ELLIOT.

Glad to know you, Mr. Lincoln.

LINCOLN.

Don't mind the "mister," Dick. Everybody just generally calls me Abe.

STUART.

(*Laughing.*) And I reckon you already know Ninian.

LINCOLN.

Yes, I've known Ninian a considerable time.

EDWARDS.

Have you made up your mind where you're going to stay, Abe?

LINCOLN.

Yep, I'm all settled, thanks to Josh Speed. I went in to his store to buy a bed and mattress and blankets, and even though he was going to charge me only seventeen dollars for the lot, it was more than I could pay, and I reckon he must of seen it was, because he offered to let me share his bed with him. I mighty soon took him up on the offer. All I had to do was take my saddle bag up to his room over the store, set it down, and I was moved.

ELLIOT.

Decided where you'll get your meals?

LINCOLN.

No, Dick, I haven't, but as I've kind of fallen into the habit of eating, I suppose I'll have to be giving it some thought.

ELLIOT.

I board with Bill Butler, and I know he wouldn't object to another pair of feet under his table.

LINCOLN.

That's mighty fine, Dick. I'm acquainted with Bill myself and I reckon he'd be willing to put up with me for a bit. (*Crossing thoughtfully R.*) The only thing that worries me is how I'm going to pay for this kindness. If I can get credit until Christmas, and my experiment here as a lawyer is a success, I'll try to pay then. If I fail as a lawyer, I'll probably never pay at all.

SPEED.

You're welcome to share my bed for as long as you want, Lincoln, and there's nothing to pay *for* except wear and tear on the mattress, and that won't run into much.

STUART.

(*Laughing.*) If Josh should kick you out of bed, Abe, you can always dig in here on the office shake-down.

EDWARDS.

(*Coming down L.*) Looks as if everyone was doing

for you except Elizabeth and me, Abe. But we'll open the door of Springfield society for you. We'll see that you meet some people that can help you, and some real likeable young ladies.

LINCOLN.

I thank you, Ninian, but the ladies have never shown any particular fondness for my gifts—if I have any, which I doubt.

EDWARDS.

Nonsense, Abe. There isn't a person in New Salem that doesn't think the world of you, and it'll be the same here in Springfield. You have a way with you. There isn't anyone you can't be friends with.

STUART.

(*Stroking his chin. Slyly.*) Understand you got your eye on a young lady already, Abe, name of Mary Owens. Thinking of . . . eh?

LINCOLN.

I know Miss Owens, but if there are any matrimonial intentions connected with our friendship, I'm pretty sure that I'm the only one who has them.

STUART.

(*Crossing and lowering himself into chair E.*) Well, glad you've come, Abe. I'll be pretty busy trying to get myself elected to Congress, and you'll have to take over most of the practice and kind of keep things straight for me while I'm away. Sit down, gents, and be comfortable.

LINCOLN.

(*Sitting chair A.*) I reckon I'll be able to handle most of it, Judge.

EDWARDS.

(*Going up and sitting on couch.*) Of course you can, Abe. Old Bowling Green and Mentor Graham always said you had a head on your shoulders, and they were right and no mistake.

LINCOLN.

They always had a powerful lot of faith in me, Ninian, and so have you. I hope you all don't overestimate my ability.

STUART.

I'm satisfied, Abe, and seeing as you're working for me, that's enough. (*A knock at door R. It opens slightly and MATILDA ARMSTRONG peers timidly through the crack.*) Come in.

MATILDA.

(*Opening the door a very little further.*) We don't wish to intrude, Judge. Are you sure you're not busy, because if you are, we can easily come back. . . .

(*SISTER BESSIE ARMSTRONG thrusts her daughter through the door and strides in behind her. SISTER ARMSTRONG is a tall, thin woman of sixty-five. Domineering and firm, she rules everything within her reach with an iron hand. We are inclined to feel sorry for her husband. She dresses precisely and primly in black, relieved by only an occasional touch of white. Her daughter, MATILDA, is a "clinging vine" of twenty or so. She rarely expresses an opinion, but if she does, it is generally her mother's. She is the sweet, ineffectual sort. She is dressed prettily and daintily, with all manner of little frills, quite as unnecessary as she is.*)

SISTER ARMSTRONG.

(*Stridently.*) Don't be a shrinking violet, Tildy! You heard the Judge say "Come in." When I hear someone say "Come in," I go in! Howdy, Judge . . . (*to the others*) Doctor, Ninian, Billy, Joshua . . . (*She sees LINCOLN.*) Ah! You must be Mr. Linkham! We came especially to see you—Rip told us you were here. My daughter and I are on the Methodist Church calling committee. (*She has come down to LINCOLN, who has risen.*)

MATILDA.

(*Sweetly, but unnecessarily.*) We've come to call.

SISTER ARMSTRONG.

Yes, to welcome you into the fold, as it were, Mr. Linkham!

LINCOLN.

(*Mildly.*) Lincoln, ma'am.

SISTER ARMSTRONG.

My error!

EDWARDS.

Well, if you'll excuse me, I'll be moving along. Elizabeth expects me home.

MATILDA.

(*Worriedly.*) I do hope we haven't driven you out, Mr. Edwards?

EDWARDS.

Oh, not at all, Miss Matilda. Coming, Dick?

ELLIOT.

(*Moving to the door.*) Believe I will, Ninian.

BILLY.

(*From the window.*) I just saw a customer go into the store, Mr. Speed.

SPEED.

(*Rising—a little too willingly.*) We'd better be getting back then, Billy. Can't keep him waiting.

SISTER ARMSTRONG.

Humph! You've kept me waiting often enough, Joshua Speed, while you finished a game of checkers or some such nonsense.

SPEED.

Well, Bessie, you don't hardly ever buy anything—you just look around.

SISTER ARMSTRONG.

Joshua, don't you give me none of your sauce.

LINCOLN.

Good day, gentlemen. I'm glad to have met you all, and Ninian and Josh, I'll see you later on this evening.

EDWARDS and SPEED.

All right, Abe.

(There is ad libbing of "good-byes" to all in the office. EDWARDS takes his hat from the peg, and the four men leave, closing the door. LINCOLN comes down just R. of C., to L. of SISTER ARMSTRONG.)

SISTER ARMSTRONG.

(Facing him. Bluntly.) Well, Mr. Linkham, are you going to invite us to set?

LINCOLN.

I'm sorry, ma'am. Sit down, please.

SISTER ARMSTRONG.

No. We can't stay but a minute. *(This checks MATILDA, who was on the point of lowering herself onto the bench. STUART turns his back on them, yawns, and almost completely ignores them through the following. SISTER ARMSTRONG, getting to business.)* Mr. Linkham, we've come to officially extend an invitation to you to join our church.

MATILDA.

(Coming down C., to L. of LINCOLN.) Yes, Mr. Lincoln, we are always wanting new, desirable members.

LINCOLN.

(Between the two.) Ladies, I thank you for your kind invitation, but why are you sure I'd be a desirable member?

SISTER ARMSTRONG.

Mr. Linkham, anyone with a face like yours would *have* to be honest.

MATILDA.

Oh, Ma!

LINCOLN.

Don't apologize, ma'am. I see your point. God would never have created anyone that was as bad at heart as I am homely of face.

SISTER ARMSTRONG.

That's what I meant. And I never apologize. It don't do any good, Mr. Linkham. People think you're lying if you say you're sorry, so I've stopped saying it!

LINCOLN.

Yes, I see what you mean, Mrs. . . . (*He hesitates.*)

SISTER ARMSTRONG.

I'm Bessie Armstrong—Church members call me Sister Armstrong. This is my daughter, Matilda. A lovely girl—make some man a fine wife.

LINCOLN.

Your servant, Miss. (*He bows a little awkwardly. Then to SISTER ARMSTRONG.*) Your name being Armstrong, I wonder if you're in any way related to Jack Armstrong of New Salem?

SISTER ARMSTRONG.

My husband is a distant relative—*distant*, thank God! The more distant the better, I say.

STUART.

(*Without turning around.*) Bowling Green was telling me how good Jack and his wife were to you, Abe, after Ann died.

LINCOLN.

(*Quietly.*) Yes, Judge. They were. (*He goes up to window.*)

STUART.

Eh? (*He turns.*) Oh, sorry, Abe.

LINCOLN.

Yes, Mrs. Armstrong, Jack and Hannah, his wife, were two of the best friends I had in New Salem.

SISTER ARMSTRONG.

(*Drawing herself up.*) That's as may be, Mr. Linkham, but do you know what that rowdy Jack called me ——

MATILDA.

Oh—Ma ——

SISTER ARMSTRONG.

Keep still, Tildy, I'll have my say! (*To LINCOLN.*) He called me, Mr. Linkham, he called me a meddling old hen! Meddling old hen, indeed! . . .

LINCOLN.

(*Seriously.*) Well, ma'am, I've heard it said that hens was mighty useful critters.

MATILDA.

(*Quickly.*) As Ma said, Mr. Lincoln, what we came for is to invite you to join our church.

LINCOLN.

Yes, so you did, and it's kind of you. But I'm afraid I must refuse the invitation.

MATILDA.

Why, whatever for?

SISTER ARMSTRONG.

Mercy on us! Don't tell me, Mr. Linkham, that we have an infidel in our midst!

LINCOLN.

(*Smiling, and speaking slowly.*) I'm hardly that, ma'am. There's no more religious man than I. I believe firmly in the teachings of the Bible, and I try my humble best to follow them. But to tell you the truth, I don't like cut-and-dried sermons. When I hear a minister preach, I like to see him act as if he were fighting bees—I'd much rather watch him than listen to him. Some people might think what I've just said a sign of infidelity; but I believe I can be religious in my own way, without

the help of any preacher to tell me that unless I'm a good man—and unless I contribute freely when the collection plate is passed around—I'll burn in the fires of hell.

SISTER ARMSTRONG.

Mr. Linkham! (She gets herself under control.)
Well! Obviously, Mr. Linkham does *not* wish to join our flock. Very well, no more shall be said. Come, Tildy! *(She goes to door R.)*

MATILDA.

(Following, but looking back.) Yes, Ma . . .

LINCOLN.

(Worriedly.) I hope I haven't offended you ladies—I had no intention of doing so.

SISTER ARMSTRONG.

(Clearly indicating that he has.) You haven't offended us in the least! Good day! *(She sweeps out. MATILDA hesitates, but her mother grasps her arm and pulls her along. They exit. LINCOLN closes the door after them.)*

LINCOLN.

(Turning to STUART.) I seem to have made a poor beginning so far as the ladies of Springfield go, Judge. Reckon I just ain't up to 'em. Never say the right thing—like about them hens.

STUART.

(Pulling his chair around.) Don't worry none, Abe. Bessie Armstrong's bark is worse than her bite. And her daughter, she ain't got bark *or* bite! Ought to be getting married soon, I should think—Heaven knows, Bessie's tried hard enough to find somebody for her. No-o-o, Bessie don't mean nothing by what she says; she's just like that if everyone don't fall into her way of thinking. Like as not, she took to you right away. But it might have been a big help to you, Abe, if you'd agreed to join the Church. It'd brought you in contact with some of the so-called big-wigs of Springfield.

LINCOLN.

If I joined the Church, Judge, I'd have to go, and if I did, I wouldn't know how to act.

STUART.

Well, you do as you like, Abe. Maybe you have the rights of it, I don't know. But Bessie, she fancies herself pretty much of a high-brow, you know. Just called you by the wrong name to put you in your place. When I come here, years back, you know what she did? She called me Seward for six months before she finally acknowledged that I was as good as she was. But she's not so bad. Been real good to Rip, when she needn't have bothered at all.

LINCOLN.

Who's he?

STUART.

Who, Rip?—Oh, a fellow they found wandering on the prairie a few years back. Must have had some sort of accident and it affected his mind. You'll make his acquaintance, Abe; most everybody in Springfield knows him.

LINCOLN.

(*Sitting chair A.*) How's the practice, Judge? Very big?

STUART.

Big enough, but nothing exciting. Haven't had a smell of a murder case for I don't know how long. You'll find that hereabouts is a country of peace, health, and plenty, and no news whatever.

LINCOLN.

That sounds as if it'd suit me fine, Judge. So far, I've had three uneventful years in the Legislature, and have been perfectly satisfied.

STUART.

That ain't what Bowling said. He said you'd been doing right well, and was—how'd he say it now?—getting to be a real important figure.

LINCOLN.

Bowling stretches things some, I reckon.

(A knock at door R.)

STUART.

Come in. *(The door opens slowly, and RIP enters.)*
Oh, howdy, Rip. Glad you came around again. This here's Abe Lincoln, my new law partner. I was just telling him about you.

LINCOLN.

How de do, Rip.

RIP.

(To STUART.) Was you . . . was you telling him about Nancy? . . . Tell him about her, Judge . . . maybe he can help me find her . . . although I've about given up hope of . . . anybody being able to . . . help me. . . .

STUART.

I ain't told him about her yet, Rip. You can tell him tomorrow when you come in to clean up. Will you come in on and off regular while I'm away?

RIP.

Yes, all right, Judge . . . I'll come in regular . . .

STUART.

Good. *(To LINCOLN.)* Hope I ain't too previous in counting on being away. I ain't been elected yet.

LINCOLN.

You'll get elected all right.

STUART.

Hope you're right. There couldn't 'a' been a campaign any dirtier than mine, and if I *ain't* elected, I don't know what politics are coming to.—Oh, here, Abe, before I forget it. I got a Webster's for you. Thought you might find it handy. *(He swings around and picks up a dictionary from his desk.)*

LINCOLN.

(*Rising and crossing L. Eagerly.*) I thank you, Judge.

STUART.

I keep one here on my desk. Find it's right convenient as a paper weight. (*He rises.*) Well, I reckon I'll be getting along home. Coming my way, Rip? (*He crosses up to R. C.*) Abe, you stay as long's you want. Just lock up when you get ready to go. You'll find the key in the upper right-hand drawer of my desk. By the way, if I get elected to Congress, I won't have no objections to your using my desk if you want; I won't be needing it.

LINCOLN.

(*At c.*) Fine, Judge. I'll just keep the table to pile things on.

STUART.

All right with me. We'll start the records and such-like tomorrow. No hurry. 'Day, Abe.

LINCOLN.

Good day, Judge Stuart . . . Rip. (JUDGE STUART and RIP *exit door R.* LINCOLN *stands at c. and flips through the pages of his dictionary. Then he crosses to table at R., sits, and picks up a pen. He writes slowly on the fly-leaf of the book, speaking aloud as he does so.*) A. Lincoln . . . Esquire . . . Attorney . . . and . . . Counselor . . . at . . . Law. (*He pushes his chair back, puts his feet on the table, and studies what he has just written. He repeats slowly, as if to hear how it sounds . . .*) Attorney and Counselor at Law. . . . (*He stretches his legs contentedly, as . . .*)

THE CURTAIN FALLS

SCENE 2.—*The same. The desk at L. is piled with papers and several large law books. The table at R. is also liberally strewn with documents.*

TIME.—*Several months later.*

(*At rise of Curtain: LINCOLN is standing at the window looking out, leaning with one hand on the window casing. RIP is sprawled on the couch, and SPEED is sitting on the end of it. BILLY is seated at the table, in chair A, turned so that he can see them.*)

BILLY.

Any better, is he, Mr. Speed?

SPEED.

He'll be all right in a few minutes, Billy. Remember, he used to have these spells in the store?

LINCOLN.

(*Turning.*) Just what's the matter with him, Josh?

SPEED.

He gets dizzy and everything goes black. Has this trouble pretty often.

LINCOLN.

Does it all come from the accident?

SPEED.

Most of it, I reckon. And he got another bad knock on the head a couple of days ago helping 'Lish Armstrong repair his barn. The doctor warned him against getting hit on the head—said it might cause a lot of trouble. (*RIP stirs and groans.*) Feeling any better, Rip?

RIP.

(*Weakly.*) Nancy . . . Nancy . . .

SPEED.

(*Kindly.*) Nancy's not here, Rip. Take it quiet a little longer.

RIP.

Want to get back to her. . . . Got to get back to . . . Nancy. . . .

SPEED.

You'll get back to her all right soon, Rip.

RIP.

(Struggling to a sitting position.) Got to get back to her now. . . . Let me up, Josh . . . got to get back to her now. . . . She's waiting for me. . . . I can see her waiting for me there at the door just like as if it was the day I left her. . . . She's just as plain . . . just as plain . . . I got to get back to her. . . . She's waiting . . .

SPEED.

(Pushing him gently down again by the shoulders.) Right now, Rip, you got to take it slow. You'll get back to her.

RIP.

(Relaxing.) Yes . . . yes, I'll get back to her . . .
(He closes his eyes.)

LINCOLN.

Poor fellow. There don't seem to be nothing we can do for him.

BILLY.

I reckon if there was, Doc Elliot would have done it. He's been looking after him for almost a year.

RIP.

(Stirring again and pulling himself to his elbow.) I'm better I think now, Josh. . . . Let me up . . .

SPEED.

Sure you feel like moving?

RIP.

Yes, I'm . . . feeling better. . . . The dizziness seems to have gone again.

SPEED.

I'll go along to your place with you.

RIP.

You don't need to bother, Josh. I'll be all right.

LINCOLN.

Better go with him, Josh.

SPEED.

Yes, I will. (*To RIP.*) No trouble, no trouble at all.

RIP.

Had these spells before . . . no need to worry . . .
I'm all right. . . .

SPEED.

Here, let me give you a hand. (*He rises and helps
RIP to his feet.*) Easy now. . . .

RIP.

(*Rising weakly.*) I'll be all right . . . once I get back
to the shack. . . .

BILLY.

Better have Doc Elliot look at you, Rip. Mr. Speed,
you ought to stop and tell him on your way back. (*He
rises and opens door R.*)

SPEED.

(*Helping RIP.*) You're right, Billy, I will.

RIP.

No . . . no, I don't want Elliot . . . don't need
him. . . .

SPEED.

He told you to let him know every time you had one of
these attacks. And you got a wallop on the head the other
day, you know, and you ought to tell him that, too. Bet-
ter let me have him come out and see you.

RIP.

Can't do me any good . . . nobody can do me any
good. . . . (*He shakes his head wearily.*)

SPEED.

See you later, Abe.

LINCOLN.

All right, Josh. [SPEED and RIP *exit slowly, door R.*

BILLY.

(*Closing the door and going back to his work.*) Poor Rip. Like Mr. Speed said, these spells used to take him right often when he'd come in the store. And then they pass just as quick's they start. Reckon there's nothing much can be done for them . . . just have to run their course—and every time he gets any sort of blow on the head, they get worse.

LINCOLN.

(*Looking out the window.*) There they go. Rip is holding his head in his hand, and probably groaning with pain, and yet I think I would gladly exchange my situation for his.

BILLY.

Is anything the matter?

LINCOLN.

I'm writing a letter proposing marriage to a woman, and it's something of a problem. (*He comes down to his desk and sits gloomily in chair E.*)

BILLY.

I've never proposed to a woman, Mr. Lincoln, but I shouldn't think it'd be very difficult.

LINCOLN.

You'll find out soon enough, Billy, just how difficult it is. Do you mind listening to what I've written? (*Quickly.*) Don't hesitate to say so if you'd rather not. As my new law clerk, you're obliged to deal only with legal documents—not with love letters; but I can always think better out loud.

BILLY.

Go ahead, Mr. Lincoln.

LINCOLN.

(*Reading quietly, evenly.*) Miss Mary S. Owens. Dear Friend Mary: This thing of living in Springfield is rather a dull business, after all; at least, it is so to me. I am quite as lonesome here as I ever was anywhere in my life. I've never been to church yet, and probably shall not be soon. I stay away because I am conscious I should not know how to behave myself. I am often thinking of what we said about your coming to live in Springfield. I am afraid you would not be satisfied. You would have to be poor, without the means of hiding your poverty. Do you believe you could bear that patiently? I know I should be much happier with you than the way I am, provided I saw no signs of discontent in you. If you feel yourself in any degree bound to me, I am willing to release you, provided you wish it; while, on the other hand, I am willing and even anxious to bind you faster, if I can be convinced that it will, in any considerable degree, add to your happiness. My opinion is that you had better not do it. (*He stops and looks up.*) That's as far as I've gone, Billy.

BILLY.

It's—it's a curious proposal, Mr. Lincoln, if I may say so. It sounds almost as if you don't *want* her to accept you.

LINCOLN.

(*Morosely.*) Perhaps I don't, Billy, and am too much the coward to admit it. I'll finish it, and you can mail it when you go out. (*He picks up his pen, and begins to write.*)

BILLY.

I'm nearly through here. Cases have been getting scarcer than hen's teeth. A letter came from Judge Stuart this morning telling you not to settle so many disputes out of court if you expect to keep the office running.

LINCOLN.

(*Writing.*) I don't see the point in taking a man's money and trying a case in court if you can get the parties mixed up in it to settle quiet-like and without a fuss. Anyway, there's not much crime in Springfield, Billy. To tell the truth, I got a notion to quit studying law, and learn carpentering. There's more need for carpenters out here than lawyers.

BILLY.

(*Worriedly.*) You ain't serious, Mr. Lincoln—about quitting law, I mean?

LINCOLN.

No, I don't reckon I am. It would be too much work to change now. And anyway, I've acquired three law books in the last four years. It would be a pity not to use 'em.

BILLY.

(*After a moment's thought.*) Mr. Lincoln, may I say something?

LINCOLN.

(*Without looking up.*) Go ahead, Billy.

BILLY.

I've wanted to say this for a long time, but—I —— Well, look here, Mr. Lincoln! You should get married!

LINCOLN.

How's that again, Billy?

BILLY.

Don't think I'm trying to be humorous, Mr. Lincoln, I'm not. I mean it; you should get married.

LINCOLN.

When this letter reaches Miss Owens in Kentucky, maybe I will.

BILLY.

That's just what I mean. (*Rising and crossing L. to*

him.) You don't want to marry—you've almost as good as written it in that letter, if I may say so. But you should marry—believe me, you should! Mr. Lincoln, you should marry someone who can set you straight on the path you're to follow and show you the great part you're going to play in the nation's history.

LINCOLN.

(Still writing.) Yes, Billy?

BILLY.

(Pleading.) Don't try to ignore me, Mr. Lincoln, I beg you!

LINCOLN.

I'm not ignoring you, Billy. I heard what you said . . . and I'm hating the thought of it.

BILLY.

(With deep sincerity.) You mustn't do that—you can't! It's your job—your duty! I felt it from the first day I met you—I felt *you* were the man who would listen, and hear Benjamin Lundy, Elijah Lovejoy, James Birney—would hear them raising their voices in protest against slavery and injustice, and would join your voice with theirs! I thought you would, that first day I met you—I *knew* you would—I had great hope! But that hope is dying, Mr. Lincoln! You sit in this little office and deliberately ignore what you know in your heart you should face!

LINCOLN.

(Dryly.) Judge Stuart was certainly right about your being a hell-fire abolitionist, Billy. *(He seals the letter.)* Here, take this along with you when you go out.

BILLY.

(He takes the letter, but refuses to give up.) Some day, Mr. Lincoln, you mark my words, you'll see that I'm *right*!

LINCOLN.

(Rising and going to window.) Perhaps, Billy, per-

haps. But where you get the idea that I'm the one chosen by God to right a wrong which a majority of people claim is no wrong, is beyond me. And if I sit in this little office, it's because I have nowhere else to sit. And now get along with the letter, and take those papers to the courtroom. You'd better go by the back stairs.

(*Enter EDWARDS, door R.*)

EDWARDS.

(*Cheerily.*) Hello, Abe, 'day, Billy.

BILLY.

How do, Mr. Edwards?

LINCOLN.

Hello, Ninian.

(*EDWARDS stands in the door and looks from one to the other.*)

EDWARDS.

Is anything wrong?

LINCOLN.

No, Ninian, nothing. You just interrupted a little friendly fracas between Billy and me. He's never tired of telling me that I'm a man of destiny, but I'm rapidly becoming tired of listening to him.

BILLY.

(*He seems about to speak then thinks better of it.*)
Good day, Mr. Edwards.

(*He crosses from his table, and exits door L.*)

EDWARDS.

He seems to be an intelligent young fellow, Abe.

LINCOLN.

(*Coming from window to L. C.*) A fine boy, Billy is, and some day he ought to make a good lawyer. The only thing wrong with him is, he's a little too certain of my future. He claims I'm stagnating in this office, but I'd

rather do that than reach the goal Billy holds up for me.—But won't you sit down, Ninian?

EDWARDS.

No, thank you, Abe; I came up to tell you I have a charming young lady below in the carriage waiting especially to meet you. She made me promise that as soon as Elizabeth and Frances went into Josh Speed's store, I'd bring her up. They've just gone, so I told her I'd see if you were in.

LINCOLN.

I take it by that, Ninian, that your wife wouldn't approve of the young lady making my acquaintance.

EDWARDS.

Not exactly that, but—well, you know Elizabeth. It's her sister and she wants to get her married—I'm not supposed to know about it, but practically everybody in Springfield does. (*He goes up to window and waves to someone below.*) Quite a belle this young lady's going to be, I can see that. She's already gotten a sizeable following of eligible bachelors trailing after her.

LINCOLN.

I reckon your wife needn't worry about *me* along those lines. A woman's the only thing I'm scared of that I know won't hurt me none. But I reckon I ought to be giving the ladies some thought, according to Billy. He just now got through telling me that I should marry and have a wife who could guide me along my destined path, or something of the sort. Billy's given to high-sounding speeches.

EDWARDS.

Well, I can't help but agree with him, Abe.

LINCOLN.

I think not, Ninian. No woman would have the patience to live with me. Do I look presentable for an introduction to the lady?

EDWARDS.

You'll pass. (*A knock at door R. EDWARDS opens it. Enter MARY TODD. She is a short, handsome girl of twenty-two, with dark, smooth, brown hair, drawn straight back. Her flashing blue eyes are clear and bright. She has a sharpness and ready wit that makes her many friends and many enemies. She is by turn sarcastic and withering, fascinating and lovable. Her love for LINCOLN later equals in intensity the fierce ambition now burning within her. Above all, she is vivid and vital. She is dressed richly and in the height of fashion.*) Mary, this is Mr. Abe Lincoln. Abe, Miss Mary Todd.

MARY.

(*Crossing to him quickly and extending her hand.*) It's a great pleasure, Mr. Lincoln.

LINCOLN.

Your servant, Miss Todd.

MARY.

Your name is a familiar one in our house. Dear Ninian, he's never tired of singing the praises of one Abraham Lincoln. I had to come up and make your acquaintance.

LINCOLN.

It's kind of Ninian to speak well of me, but a heap kinder of you to listen.

MARY.

Nonsense, Mr. Lincoln. It's a pleasure to listen. Ninian is confident you have a brilliant future ahead of you.

LINCOLN.

Ninian, I think, is over confident.

EDWARDS.

(*Emphatically.*) I think *not*, Abe!

LINCOLN.

You've just come from Kentucky to Springfield, Miss Todd?

MARY.

Yes; I've been once before on a visit, but now I've come to stay. I find it so refreshingly informal here—so different. Why, you allow your live stock free run of the streets.

LINCOLN.

Yes, Miss Todd, you'll find that in Springfield a man and a hog have equal right upon the sidewalk. It all comes down to who has the most persistence, and generally it's the hog. Will you sit down?

MARY.

Thank you. (EDWARDS *holds chair C for her, and she sits.*) I'm going to love it here in Springfield. Elizabeth is planning marvelous entertainment for Frances and me.—Frances is my sister; she came some time ago.

LINCOLN.

I met Miss Frances.

MARY.

And *I've* met some of the most delightful people in the short time I've been here.

EDWARDS.

(*Laughing.*) When Mary says "delightful people," Abe, she means "delightful people" of the male sex.

MARY.

(*Coyly.*) Ninian, you do say the most embarrassing things.

EDWARDS.

I was telling Abe that I wouldn't be surprised if you found a husband while you were here. Steve Douglas has completely fallen into the trap, you know.

MARY.

(*Needlessly sharp.*) I find Mr. Douglas a very charming person! (*To LINCOLN. Prettily.*) Please, Mr. Lincoln, don't mind my dear brother-in-law. He's not very tactful—nor very truthful.

(EDWARDS laughs and goes up to window.)

LINCOLN.

Well, Miss Todd, I'm sure I can understand the captivity of Steve Douglas.

MARY.

(*Sweetly.*) How very gallant, Mr. Lincoln.

LINCOLN.

That's the first time I've ever been called that.

EDWARDS.

(*Looking out window.*) Here come Elizabeth and Frances. I never saw anything like the way my wife knows where I am. It's uncanny.

MARY.

Never mind, Ninian, you have an ally now. I'm a match for Elizabeth.

(*A knock at door R.*)

EDWARDS.

(*He opens the door with an air of resignation.*) Come in, my dear.

(*Enter ELIZABETH TODD EDWARDS and FRANCES TODD.*)

ELIZABETH is a handsome, aristocratic woman of middle age. She is extremely correct in manner, speech, and dress, and is the perfect mistress for her husband's fine house. She is the sort who plans people's lives and is happy doing it. Her attire is the richest, most handsome and most complete that can be bought in Springfield—and Boston. FRANCES, a sister, older than MARY but younger than ELIZABETH,

is a sweet, pretty girl of twenty-three or so. She is dressed attractively, but more simply than either MARY or ELIZABETH.)

ELIZABETH.

(Disprovingly.) So here you are, Mary. I might have known.

MARY.

(Quite undisturbed.) I came up to see Mr. Lincoln. Ninian promised to introduce us.

ELIZABETH.

Oh, *did* you, Ninian? . . . *(Back again to MARY.)* I don't think it was a very ladylike thing to do, Mary, forcing yourself upon Mr. Lincoln.

MARY.

I wanted to meet him.

LINCOLN.

Miss Todd was most welcome, Mrs. Edwards.

ELIZABETH.

You *know* that a lady should wait until the gentleman comes to *her*. But we won't discuss it now. Come, we must go. You'll excuse us, Mr. Lincoln?

MARY.

But Elizabeth, I just this moment came. Now that I've already committed the unpardonable sin, let me, at least, reap the benefits of it. Do sit down for a moment.

ELIZABETH.

Thank you, no.

MARY.

Then you sit, Frances. There's no need for you to be uncomfortable because Elizabeth enjoys it. *(FRANCES sits on the bench.)* You say you've met Frances, Mr. Lincoln?

FRANCES.

Mr. Lincoln and I know each other quite well.

MARY.

Not *too* well, I hope, or Dick will be frightfully jealous. Who knows, he might even challenge Mr. Lincoln to a duel.

LINCOLN.

Well, Miss Todd, I seldom fight duels and when I do, I'm mighty particular whom I fight with. Would you be meaning Dick Elliot?

MARY.

Yes. Frances and he are betrothed, and dear Elizabeth is terribly disapproving. Aren't you, Elizabeth?

ELIZABETH.

If you mean, do I favor the match, I certainly do not!

FRANCES.

(*To ELIZABETH.*) Must we discuss it now?

MARY.

(*Tartly.*) We must sometime, if you want to marry Dick.

(*Enter BILLY, door R. He bursts into the office breathing heavily, and, waving a newspaper, rushes up to LINCOLN.*)

BILLY.

(*Shouting.*) He's dead, Mr. Lincoln! *Now* do you believe me when I tell you that you must do your part in saving the country from the horrible fate in store for it! *Now* do you believe me! They've killed him!—killed him—and you wouldn't listen! You'll never listen!

LINCOLN.

(*Quickly.*) Billy, are you drunk?

BILLY.

(*Frantically.*) No, I'm not drunk—I wish I *were*! Then I could forget what they've done—they've killed

him, that's what they've done! They've murdered Elijah Lovejoy!

EDWARDS.

What? Let me see that paper, Billy! (*He comes down to take it.*)

BILLY.

(*Snatching it away.*) No! Let Mr. Lincoln see the paper! (*He thrusts it into LINCOLN's hands.*) Mr. Lincoln, read it—read it, and see how an insane mob shot and killed an innocent man—murdered him because he spoke what he thought and in so thinking was trying to right a wrong of which no democracy should be guilty! Read how they murdered him—in a country where freedom of speech is a guaranteed and cherished right! Read it and think of yourself sitting here, refusing to face the issue of slavery—refusing to listen to me—to anyone! Read it and call yourself a coward, because that's what you are!—*That's what you are!*

LINCOLN.

(*Clutching BILLY's coat. Fiercely.*) Billy, be silent! I never want to hear you talk that way again. I'm sick of hearing you tell me I'm shirking my job, that I'm refusing to face issues which I don't believe exist . . .

BILLY.

You *do* believe it, Mr. Lincoln! You *do*! You're lying to yourself if you don't admit it!

LINCOLN.

(*He pushes him aside and goes up to window. Suddenly quiet.*) You're an abolitionist, Billy. All I ask is that you don't try to convert me. I fail to see that it's cowardly to keep clear of a terrible situation—an awful danger which, once set off, will explode with a repercussion felt around the world. Slavery's not a good thing, but show me a way of abolishing it without causing secession or civil war. And secession would be more terrible than slavery, for it would rend us asunder. And

civil war would be more terrible yet, for it would not only divide us, but would bleed us to death, and destroy us.

BILLY.

(*Violently.*) If slavery can't be wiped out without a civil war, then let there *be* a civil war, and be hanged!

LINCOLN.

You show ignorance of everything but your own opinion, Billy. You want me to go forward and take up the cause of your Elijah Lovejoy. You want me to advance in politics so that I may fight Lovejoy's cause, and, you hope, win it. But I don't want to fight his cause, worthy as it is. I don't want to fight any cause. For some day—a day not so far away—the fighting of that cause may call for the making of decisions too terrible to make.

BILLY.

Someone's got to make them!

LINCOLN.

I hope and pray to God that it won't be me.

EDWARDS.

(*At L. Thoughtfully.*) But Billy's right in a good many ways, Abe. This slavery question is cropping up more and more. It's a bad situation, and people are trying to right it with violence, which is wrong, but I suppose it'll eventually come to that, and then there's going to be real trouble. Sooner or later, if you keep on in the Legislature, and if you get along as we all hope you will, you'll have to come right down to it and make a stand, hard as it will be.

LINCOLN.

The longer I can avoid that day, the longer I shall avoid trouble. Of that I'm convinced. (*Turning and coming down to BILLY, who is at L. C.*) Billy, you'd better run out and refresh yourself. You look tuckered out.

BILLY.

(*Finally admitting defeat.*) Very well. I'll go, Mr.

Lincoln. (*He goes up to door R. Turning, beaten.*)
Mrs. Edwards . . . Miss Todd . . . Miss Frances . . .
Mr. Edwards . . . Mr. Lincoln . . . I apologize for my
conduct. . . .

LINCOLN.

Go along, Billy.

[BILLY *exits*.]

ELIZABETH.

I should say, Mr. Lincoln, that your law clerk is something of a radical young man.

LINCOLN.

He's a sincere young man, Mrs. Edwards. Because of that I can excuse a great deal.

ELIZABETH.

(*Shortly.*) We must go—we really must. Good day, Mr. Lincoln. Come, Ninian, Frances, Mary . . .

EDWARDS.

(*Crossing to door R.*) 'Day, Abe.

FRANCES.

(*Rising.*) Good-bye, Mr. Lincoln.

ELIZABETH.

Come, Mary.

MARY.

(*Who hasn't moved.*) In just a moment, Elizabeth.

EDWARDS.

You come, my dear. (He leads his wife out, although she is extremely reluctant to go. FRANCES exits with them.)

MARY.

(*After they have gone.*) It's been a great pleasure meeting you, Mr. Lincoln.

LINCOLN.

I thank you, Miss Todd. I wish to apologize for the outburst while Billy was here.

MARY.

No apology is required, I assure you, Mr. Lincoln. We must see more of you at Ninian's house.

LINCOLN.

I'm afraid Mrs. Edwards and I never did get on particularly well.

MARY.

(*Crossing to him.*) You shall come as my guest. Will you?—Please say you will.

LINCOLN.

With pleasure, Miss Todd.

MARY.

Thank you. You're kind. (*She hesitates and there is a pause. Then . . .*) Before I go, I'd—I'd like to say something . . . if I may . . .

LINCOLN.

Why—yes, of course.

MARY.

I should have had to say it anyway, even without your permission. Mr. Lincoln, I am a woman. Besides that, I have the reputation, I know, of being an unusually frivolous one. I'm not supposed to think . . . things! I'm not supposed to be aware of the bungling of our country's stupid statesmen—nor of the tragic danger which I know to be threatening the Union. As a woman, I am quite helpless. But now that I have met you and talked with you, heard Ninian speak of you in such glowing terms, seen the faith Billy, your law clerk, has in you . . . I—I—somehow feel . . . comforted. (*She looks at him a moment, then drops her head in something like embarrassment at having spoken. Then suddenly, looking into his face again.*) Good-bye. [*She exits quickly, door R.*

(*LINCOLN stands, looking after her. Then he lowers his head and sees the paper in his hand. He lifts it*

and stares at it a moment. Then he raises his head and looks at the door, through which MARY TODD has just passed.)

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT II

SCENE I.—*The same. The office shows increasing signs of occupancy in the way of littered papers and books.*

TIME.—*Two months after the preceding scene.*

(*At rise of Curtain: BILLY is sitting at his table, taking notes from a large law book. FRANCES is sitting in chair C, outwardly calm, but betraying her nervousness by incessant twisting of her handkerchief. MARY is standing at window looking out. She paces down L., glances at the impassive BILLY, and then returns agitatedly to the window. She is crushing a folded newspaper in her hands.*)

MARY.

(*Suddenly.*) Mr. Herndon, *when* is he coming!

BILLY.

(*Irritatedly.*) Begging your pardon, Miss Todd, for the tenth time, he should be here soon.

MARY.

You said that half an hour ago! Why *doesn't* he come! What can be keeping him!

BILLY.

He might have stopped in at Mr. Speed's store, I suppose.

MARY.

If he's there, he never *will* come! (*She goes up to window and looks out.*)

(*BILLY goes back to his work. MARY comes down L. and paces about, her hands folded tightly in front of her, and clutching the paper.*)

FRANCES.

(*Nervously.*) When he does come, do—do you think he'll be able to do anything at all?

MARY.

Yes, Frances, I feel sure he can, or I shouldn't be here now ready to beg for his help!

FRANCES.

You're begging for me—for Dick and me—and I love you for it and I thank you! *I should never have known what to do, and neither would Dick—it's such a desperate situation! But if Mr. Lincoln refuses to help—what then?*

MARY.

(*Quietly.*) He won't refuse, Frances. I think I can promise you that.

BILLY.

Refuse what, Miss Todd—if I may ask?

MARY.

(*Sharply.*) I'd rather you didn't!

BILLY.

(*Coldly.*) Pardon me, Miss Todd. (*He resumes his work, but with signs of angry emotion.*)

(*MARY goes up to window.*)

FRANCES.

(*Suddenly, desperately.*) Mary—it—it *can't* be true, can it?

MARY.

What do you mean? About Dick? Frances, you love Dick and you trust him, don't you?

FRANCES.

(*Eagerly.*) Yes—yes, I do!

MARY.

Then you know nothing bad about him is true. If you love him, it just *can't* be true!

FRANCES.

I *do* love him and I *do* trust him and I *do* believe him! But—but everyone seems so sure—so terribly sure that—that —

MARY.

They're blind, spiteful gossips! They don't know what they think or what they believe! (*She paces from down L. to window and back. With mounting impatience.*) Oh, why doesn't he come! (*BILLY closes the heavy book with a bang. Both women start sharply.*) Mr. Herndon, please!

BILLY.

(*Coolly.*) I beg pardon again, Miss Todd. I had no intention of startling you or Miss Frances.

MARY.

We're—we're very much upset! (*BILLY crosses to bookshelves and replaces book. MARY turns to window. Suddenly.*) Thank heaven! He's coming across the square!

FRANCES.

(*Springing up.*) Is he? Where?

MARY.

Mr. Herndon, would you mind—leaving us?

BILLY.

I have work to do, Miss Todd.

MARY.

I'm sorry, but what we have to discuss with Mr. Lincoln is very private, and I should prefer that you go.

(*BILLY, angry and tight-lipped, crosses to door R. Without saying a word, he nods shortly, and exits.*)

BILLY'S VOICE.

(*Off.*) Two visitors, Mr. Lincoln.

LINCOLN'S VOICE.

(*Off.*) Oh, thank you, Billy.

(*Enter LINCOLN door R. He takes off his hat as he comes in.*)

LINCOLN.

(*At door.*) Good day, Miss Todd and Miss Frances.

MARY.

(*Going to him. Urgently.*) Mr. Lincoln, thank heaven you've come ——

FRANCES.

(*Following.*) —We've been waiting for over an hour ——

MARY.

—Something terrible has happened! We need your help!

FRANCES.

You must help us! God knows what will happen if you don't!—God knows what already *has* happened!

LINCOLN.

(*A little taken aback.*) Well, just a moment, ladies, while I unload my branch office—(*he holds up his hat*) and make one record in the ledger before I forget it, and we'll see what this is about. Will you sit down? (*He crosses to his desk, takes papers out of his hat, and places the hat on top. Then he opens a large book, sits down, dips a pen and writes slowly, speaking aloud . . .*) Lincoln . . . paid . . . for . . . wood . . . fifty . . . cents. . . . (*To MARY.*) I so seldom keep records, Judge Stuart is beginning to wonder where his money's going.

MARY.

(*Impatiently.*) Yes, yes, but you must listen!

LINCOLN.

(*Closing the book.*) What's happened, Miss Todd?

MARY.

(*At R. C. Tensely.*) Do you know that Old Rip has disappeared from his house and no one knows where he is?

LINCOLN.

I just heard about it, and it's mighty peculiar. He was ailing worse than usual and Dick was taking care of him, wasn't he?

MARY.

Yes, and Mr. Lincoln, the people of the town are accusing Dick Elliot of having murdered him!

LINCOLN.

How's that again, Miss Todd?

MARY.

People are hinting that Dick *murdered* Old Rip!

LINCOLN.

How can they say that—have they found his body?

MARY.

No, but we heard them talking in the square—Frances and I—and there were threats—ugly threats—being whispered around against Dick. As soon as people saw us coming, they were quiet and just looked at us.

LINCOLN.

But what's this all about, Miss Todd? It's something to kind of muddle a man up.

MARY.

Two children have died in the last two months while under Dick's care, and the people are beginning to suspect that he killed them with his treatment—whether intentionally or unintentionally they can't seem to decide. A little over a week ago Rip had another accident—he fell and struck his head against the stove. It happened while

he was at Ninian's house and I was there and saw it. Then he was suddenly taken ill, as you said, and Dick operated on his head. And now people are saying that the operation killed the old man.

FRANCES.

(*Crossing to him.*) We've come to ask you to protect Dick, Mr. Lincoln. If something isn't done to clear his name, his whole life's ruined—and mine, too, but that's not so important. But Dick *must* go on with his medicine—he lives and breathes it, it means so much to him!

LINCOLN.

(*Reasonably.*) If no one's found a body, what evidence have these people got that harm has come to Rip?

MARY.

I don't know. But someone started the story that Dick's operation killed the old man. That one malicious whisper has started everyone talking. (*She goes R., nervously.*)

FRANCES.

(*Desperately.*) It's even been printed in the paper!

MARY.

(*Opening the paper.*) Yes, this is what the "Sangamo Journal" says—it came out only a few minutes ago—vile gossip which they had no right to print! (*She reads in a sharp, staccato voice.*) "Ugly rumors are being circulated concerning Springfield's young doctor, Richard Elliot. It is learned that a regular patient of his, a man known to everyone as Old Rip, has mysteriously disappeared from his home on the edge of town near the river, after having undergone, six days ago, an operation by Elliot for an unexplained brain ailment. There is suspicion that the old man died due to this operation and that Elliot, not daring to admit the fact, has chosen to fake a disappearance, and has disposed of the body. We are remembering two other patients of the doctor who have died in the last two months, both small and harmless children, and are wondering if their deaths were brought

about by Elliot's intentional or unintentional negligence. If intentional, this man is a murderer, and if the civil authorities claim they have not sufficient grounds for taking action, he should be dealt with by the townspeople in their own way. If unintentional, the man is a menace to our lives and safety, and the lives and safety of our children, and his terrible incompetence should be publicly exposed so that he will threaten the lives of no other unsuspecting persons who desire his services as a doctor. It is hoped by this paper that the people of Springfield will not let this warning go unheeded, and will take immediate steps concerning the unexplained disappearance of the man known as Old Rip."

FRANCES.

Mr. Lincoln, with that in the paper, Dick's practice here is ruined!

MARY.

More than that, his life may be in danger!

LINCOLN.

The whole thing won't help him any. An article like that is just the thing to set people to doing a lot of wondering.

(Enter SPEED, hurriedly, door R.)

SPEED.

(From the door. Panting from effort.) Frances! Abe! A crowd's gathered and they're looking for Dick—I don't know what they aim to do, but it doesn't look good. Ninian's looking for him now. Do you know where he is, Frances?

FRANCES.

(Terrified.) No, I've no idea!

SPEED.

We've got to find him!

FRANCES.

Will these people harm him?

SPEED.

They may if they get to him before we do!

FRANCES.

Mr. Lincoln, what'll we do?

LINCOLN.

This mob, Josh—is it a crowd of drunkards and loafers?

SPEED.

No, they're intelligent people who've lost their reason and gone crazy! They're sure Dick is a murderer and they've made up their minds to get him. I'd like to know who started this!

MARY.

There's only one—the woman who generally took care of Rip when he was ill! It must have been she!

SPEED.

That's it! Bessie Armstrong! She's got a mean tongue and she's a gossip—in spite of her sanctimonious, church-going ways! This would be just the sort of thing she'd do! She's spread the story, and now everyone's gotten it, including the paper!

MARY.

(*Crossing to him. Earnestly.*) Will you help us, Mr. Lincoln?

LINCOLN.

I'm hanged if I know, Miss Todd. There doesn't seem to be much I can do, unless Dick is brought into a court of law and formally accused of murder—and they can't do that without a body to back up their charges.

SPEED.

It looks to me as if the best thing for him to do is to get out of Springfield and as far away as he can!

FRANCES.

That wouldn't do any good, Mr. Speed, don't you see?

This will be with him for the rest of his life unless it's settled now! And Dick wouldn't run away—never!

LINCOLN.

It will die down soon, Miss Frances, whatever trouble there is now.

MARY.

It will never die down for Dick, Mr. Lincoln. Frances is right—it will ruin him in the end if it doesn't destroy him now. Mr. Lincoln, I beg you, don't let your eternal aversion for work—pardon me, but I must say it even though I have no right—don't let your eternal aversion for work keep you from defending a man's name, whether he's brought into court or not!

(Enter ELLIOT and EDWARDS, hurriedly, door R.)

FRANCES.

(Rushing to him.) Dick, you're all right! Thank God!

ELLIOT.

(Taking her in his arms. Just R. of C.) Yes, I'm all right, thanks to Ninian. Don't worry, darling.

EDWARDS.

(At door.) I got him just in time! Another two minutes and they'd have found him!

LINCOLN.

Is this mob really serious, Ninian?

EDWARDS.

I'll say they're serious, Abe! *(He goes to window.)* They're coming into the square now. Look for yourself and see what you think!

(They all gather around the window, and the angry murmur of the crowd is heard from below, becoming louder and louder, all under following.)

LINCOLN.

(*Seriously.*) Miss Todd, it looks as though something will have to be done, whether they take Dick into a law court or whether they don't.

FRANCES.

(*Gratefully.*) God bless you, Mr. Lincoln!

LINCOLN.

Don't bless me yet, Miss Frances. Wait a while.

ELLIOT.

I swear I don't know what this is all about, Abe! It's as much of a mystery to me as to anyone—Rip's disappearance! I operated to relieve pressure on his brain brought to a crisis by this latest fall—I *had* to, although it was risky and I knew it—he'd have died if I hadn't! The trouble came on suddenly. I operated six days ago, and he's been semi-conscious ever since. Now he's disappeared, and I don't know where he is! I tell you I don't—I didn't kill him—I swear I didn't kill him!

EDWARDS.

(*Going to him.*) Take it quiet, Dick.

ELLIOT.

(*Turning on him, desperately.*) But no one will believe me! Those people, they all think I murdered him! They all think I killed the children I took care of and who died!—I didn't—I did all I could to save them —

FRANCES.

(*Going down R. to him.*) We believe you, Dick—every one of us here believes you.

MARY.

(*Coming down C. To ELLIOT.*) Mr. Lincoln has promised to help us.

SPEED.

(*From window.*) Someone's pointing to your office, Abe! The crowd's coming this way across the square.

(*Crowd noises louder.*)

EDWARDS.

(*Going quickly up to window.*) Someone must have seen us bring you up here, Dick!

MARY.

(*Anxiously.*) Can you keep them out, Mr. Lincoln?

LINCOLN.

I reckon I can have a pretty good try at it.

(*VOICES of the crowd shouting: "Come on out, Eliot!" "Lincoln, we know he's there!" "We don't want you, Abe, but send down that young pup!"* etc., etc. LINCOLN, after looking out, comes down L. to his chair, and stands there.*)

MARY.

(*Looking out.*) The "Journal" editor's coming up!

SPEED.

Barricade both doors quick! Ninian, better close those shutters in case they smash the window! (*He turns to push bench in front of door R.*)

(*EDWARDS reaches to close top shutters.*)

MARY.

Bessie Armstrong's coming up with him!

EDWARDS.

Then she's at the bottom of the whole thing, depend upon it!

LINCOLN.

(*Quietly.*) Josh, Ninian, don't bother with the doors and shutters. Let the editor and Mrs. Armstrong come in.

*If not enough "extras" are available to obtain the desired effect, a recording may be secured, and the necessary lines shouted over the background of the record by two or three voices. The director may experiment until he has obtained a satisfactory effect.

FRANCES.

(*Crossing to LINCOLN.*) But they'll take Dick away—they may harm him!

ELLIOT.

(*Crossing L.*) Do you think there's any danger of a hanging, Abe? I'm no coward, but if there's a chance of that, I'm running for it!

LINCOLN.

They ain't going to hang you, Dick—not for a while, anyhow.

MARY.

(*Imperiously.*) Mr. Lincoln, they mustn't hang him at all!

LINCOLN.

(*Smiling.*) Well, now, Miss Todd, maybe they won't.

MARY.

(*Turning away, impatiently.*) Oh, you can be *most* exasperating!

SPEED.

(*At window.*) You don't realize the seriousness of this, Abe. I've seen what mobs can do before. They've murdered more than one innocent man and thought they were doing justice!

LINCOLN.

I realize the seriousness of it all right, Josh.

(*Loud knocking at door R. FRANCES pulls ELLIOT up L., and they face the door R. MARY stands near EDWARDS, her head thrown back.*)

ELDRED'S VOICE.

(*Shouting—off.*) Open up here, Lincoln! We know he's in there! Open up!

LINCOLN.

Well, Potter, lift the latch and come in. The door ain't locked. (*The door opens. Enter POTTER ELDRED and*

SISTER ARMSTRONG. ELDRED is a tall, stout man, pompous, self-righteous, and gifted with what he believes to be a wonderful faculty for oratory. He addresses everyone as if addressing a crowd, and takes upon his own shoulders the entire responsibility for the conduct of Springfield. He is quite elegantly dressed. LINCOLN goes up a few steps to meet them.) Won't you step in, Potter—and you, too, Mrs. Armstrong?

ELDRED.

Lincoln, we'll step in only long enough to take the man we're after!

SISTER ARMSTRONG.

(*Coming down R., beside him.*) There he is, Potter.

ELDRED.

Yes, I see him! Come on, young Elliot, you're going with us!

LINCOLN.

Now wait a minute, Potter. Dick ain't going anywhere for a while.

ELDRED.

(*Indignantly.*) I'm warning you, Lincoln, the people of Springfield won't tolerate any interference on your part in this matter. You'll be sorry if you don't keep out of it.

LINCOLN.

It appears to me I'll be a darned sight sorrier if I *do*!

ELDRED.

If he doesn't come with me, we'll come up here and take him by force!

LINCOLN.

The first man who comes into this office anything but peaceable-like I'll throw from here to New Salem.

SPEED.

Yes, Abe, and you can do it, too!

ELDRED.

We want Elliot—every honest, upright, decent citizen of Springfield wants him. I'm their spokesman, and I say that for them, and I mean it! They'll not stand for his practices any longer, and they won't allow justice to be interfered with! We've got a cure for Elliot!

LINCOLN.

Yes, I noticed you hinted at it in the newspaper. Am I right in presuming that you wrote that article in the "Journal"?

ELDRED.

You are! I voiced the sentiments of the average man. I made him articulate; I spoke for him the thoughts he himself couldn't put into words!

LINCOLN.

Well, that kindness, Potter, is going to cost you considerable money when my client sues you for libel.

ELDRED.

Eh?—Your client?

LINCOLN.

Dick here has placed himself in my hands, and my first action as his lawyer is going to be to save him from getting hanged. The first client I had *did* hang, and I can't afford to let it happen twice.

ELDRED.

Let me tell you something, Lincoln! Anyone who would murder a poor, innocent old man in cold blood doesn't deserve a hanging—he deserves *worse*!

LINCOLN.

On what grounds do you base your statement that Rip was murdered?

ELDRED.

On *this*! (*He pulls a blue bandanna handkerchief from his pocket and holds it out.*) This is Rip's handkerchief, isn't it?—the one he always carried? I found

it right on the edge of the river bank only a hundred yards from his house. It's not likely he could have *walked* there—he was unconscious, and Elliot'll admit it! Very well: He was *carried* there—carried there to the river bank and *thrown* in!

LINCOLN.

Have you found his body?

ELDRED.

No, we haven't, but we will. When I think of him—kind and obliging—Lincoln, I said it once and I say it again: The man who killed him don't deserve to be let off with a hanging alone!

SISTER ARMSTRONG.

(*Shrewishly.*) There's the fiend responsible for the whole terrible thing! We've been risking our lives with that man who calls himself a doctor—a *doctor*! Humph! He's a quack—a fraud—but mark my words, he's going to pay his score!

LINCOLN.

(*In mild surprise.*) You ain't in favor of hanging him, too, are you, Mrs. Armstrong—you who follow the teachings of the Lord so close?

SISTER ARMSTRONG.

This is one time, Linkham, where the teachings of the Lord don't apply! There are exceptions, you know!

LINCOLN.

Yes, I've noticed there are generally quite a *few* exceptions. Well, Potter, barring the use of force, which I won't allow, what are you aiming on doing?

ELDRED.

I'll tell you what we're going to do, Lincoln! We're going to bring Elliot before a committee of townspeople, investigate his case, and see that he gets run out of Springfield and never practices his so-called medicine

again. (*Impressively.*) Should we find circumstances warrant it, we might go even further.

LINCOLN.

Why bother with a hearing if you've already decided what you're going to do? But at least, it's a safer process for my client than hanging would be, so go ahead and let your vigilance committee sit. I reckon you can hire the courtroom downstairs for a reasonable fee, and if you charge admission, you'll be able to clear expenses. One of the major expenses being the libel suit against you.

ELDRED.

Ha, you don't frighten me, Abraham Lincoln! You're a clever lawyer when you've a mind to work, but in this case the people of Springfield are against you and you're licked from the start. We're having the meeting tomorrow at three o'clock—and to make sure we know where he is, Elliot's going to cool his heels in the jail house over night. (*He makes a move to cross to ELLIOT.*)

LINCOLN.

(*Stopping him.*) I think not, Potter. He'll stay with me.

ELDRED.

Abe Lincoln, I'm not in the habit of having my word disputed, and I won't have it now! I said he was going to the jail house!

SISTER ARMSTRONG.

Don't let him talk you out of anything, Potter!

LINCOLN.

(*Quietly.*) Either I personally guarantee the fact that Dick will be on hand when the committee sits tomorrow, Mrs. Armstrong, or, in the event the townspeople are proven wrong—as they will be—in their grave accusation, my client will sue *you* heavily for libel, too.

SISTER ARMSTRONG.

(*Reconsidering hurriedly.*) Er—well, Potter, Mr.

Linkham's word's good, I reckon! Let him have his way this once.

ELDRED.

I'm not in the habit of giving ground, but in this case, all right! I'll do it!—But, Lincoln, if that boy isn't here tomorrow, it'll go mighty hard with you—and harder with him when we find him!

LINCOLN.

By tomorrow, Eldred, I expect to be able to absolve my client from all the illegal charges you're making now.

SISTER ARMSTRONG.

(*Scornfully.*) Big talk!

ELDRED.

(*With the condescending manner of one giving advice.*) Now, Lincoln, look here. Why waste your time and risk your good reputation in this? Elliot's as guilty as sin and we're going to prove it. When we find that body, it's going to be all up with him—and you, too, if you're on his side. Lincoln, why don't you just step out now, while the stepping's good?

LINCOLN.

I'll step out. But not just now, Potter.

SISTER ARMSTRONG.

Even if the body's not found, we've got a case—a case that'll satisfy the people!

MARY.

But not one that will satisfy Mr. Lincoln!

ELDRED.

Miss Todd, let me warn you—just because you've got your brother-in-law's money on Elliot's side, don't think you're going to get him out of this. The people won't tolerate quacks—and what's worse *murdering* quacks! This isn't going to die down, you can depend upon that—I'll see it doesn't! Two innocent children and now an old

man! Dick Elliot, you'll be out of this town or at a rope's end before the sun sets tomorrow!

LINCOLN.

Good day, Potter. Good day, Mrs. Armstrong.

ELDRED.

Very well, we'll go! But we'll see you tomorrow at three o'clock, Lincoln!

LINCOLN.

You're likely to see me on and off for a considerable time *after* that—collecting the libel money.

ELDRED.

(*Snorting.*) Libel! Plain truth, every blessed word! You can't be sued for printing the truth!

SISTER ARMSTRONG.

Indeed you *can't*, Potter!

LINCOLN.

(*Crossing and holding door open.*) And take the crowd with you, Potter. And you'd better say something to cool 'em off, because in their present state they're dangerous, and if anything should happen to my client at their hands, I'll hold you personally responsible and answerable to me.

ELDRED.

There'll be no hanging—until *after* the meeting! Then we'll see. Come on, Bessie.

[ELDRED and SISTER ARMSTRONG *exit*, door R.]

MARY.

(*Crossing to him.*) Abe, how can we ever thank you?

ELLIOT.

You probably saved my neck; I sure am grateful!

FRANCES.

You were splendid, Mr. Lincoln!

SPEED.

You sure told 'em, Abe!

EDWARDS.

Indeed you did! (*He looks out window.*) Eldred's dispersing the crowd.

LINCOLN.

(*Going to his desk.*) Yes, I "told 'em," all right, as you put it, Josh. But now what happens? All they've got is ugly, mean suspicion, and the only way to fight that is with facts—and we have no facts, not even as many as *they* have, and the Lord knows they have few enough!

EDWARDS.

We only have until tomorrow, Abe. That doesn't give us much time.

LINCOLN.

You're right, Ninian, it doesn't.

SPEED.

Do you think it's safe for Dick to go out?

LINCOLN.

You'd better stay close to your own place, Dick, until this is all over—one way or another.

SPEED.

I still think you ought to get out of Springfield.

ELLIOT.

If I can get a fair hearing, I won't run, and that's that! If I did, it would brand me right away as the criminal they already think me.

LINCOLN.

I don't know how fair the hearing will be, Dick. I can't promise you a very strong defense, and this vigilance committee is bound to be out for your blood.

ELLIOT.

I don't care, Abe. I'm staying.

FRANCES.

Dick, darling, I love you for that, but—are you *sure*!

ELLIOT.

(*Positively.*) I'm sure.

EDWARDS.

Then come along home with us. You'll be safer there.

LINCOLN.

It would be wise, I think, Dick.

ELLIOT.

That's kind of you, Ninian, if Mrs. Edwards won't object.

EDWARDS.

She'll object on principle, but she won't mean it.

ELLIOT.

Then thanks, I'll come.

FRANCES.

May we go now, Mr. Lincoln?

LINCOLN.

I reckon so, Miss Frances. I don't think of anything else. I may come around to Ninian's and see you later on, Dick, but then again, maybe I won't.

MARY.

(*From window.*) Be truthful with us, Mr. Lincoln. Do you think you'll be able to do anything which will clear Dick's name—anything at all? I know what mobs are like, and how unreasonable they are.

LINCOLN.

(*Without turning to her.*) I don't know, Miss Todd. I talked pretty big to Potter Eldred and Mrs. Armstrong, but this is different from anything I've ever run up against before. There's nothing I can get a hold of. And we got so little time . . .

ELLIOT.

Before God, I don't know anything about the whole affair, Abe. I operated because I had to—Rip would have died if I hadn't. When I saw him day before yesterday, he was still only semi-conscious. If he's been done away with, I don't know who did it or why—but I'd like to.

LINCOLN.

About these two children that died, Dick. What was ailing them?

ELLIOT.

Seemed to be just plain stomach-ache. I did all I could to relieve them, but it didn't do any good—they kept getting worse until they died. The parents didn't say anything, but, now that I think of it, they acted peculiarly—as if it were my fault that their children died. But I swear it *wasn't*, Abe!

SPEED.

The crowd's gone. We'd better get you to Ninian's house, Dick.

ELLIOT.

(*Going up to the door with FRANCES.*) I feel like a confounded criminal!

SPEED.

That's about what you are in Springfield just now, but don't worry. Abe'll fix things.

LINCOLN.

I'll do my best, Dick, I promise you.

ELLIOT.

I know you will, Abe, and I'm mighty grateful!

FRANCES.

So am I, Mr. Lincoln! For what you've done, we'll never be able to repay you.

LINCOLN.

We'll think about the fee later on. Now you'd better go before Eldred stirs up any more demonstrations.

EDWARDS.

Right you are, Abe. Out with you, Dick, Frances . . .

(*They all go to door R., ad libbing "Good-byes" and "Thank yous." All exit but MARY.*)

MARY.

(*After they have gone. With real sincerity.*) Thank you, Mr. Lincoln.

LINCOLN.

No thanks required, Miss Todd.

MARY.

(*With honest admiration.*) The way you handled that blustering editor and that shrewish woman — You can lead people, Mr. Lincoln—you were born to lead! The more I see of you, the more I know that for a fact!

LINCOLN.

It's kind of you to say that, Miss Todd.

MARY.

(*Quietly.*) Sometime . . . not so far away . . . you're going to leave Springfield to do big things.

LINCOLN.

I don't know's I'd want to leave Springfield. It's mighty nice here and I like it. (*He hesitates.*) Miss Todd—you—you said something just a little while ago, which I couldn't help but notice particularly, and now can't help but mention. . . .

MARY.

What was that?

LINCOLN.

You—you called me "Abe." For the first time since I've known you, you called me "Abe."

MARY.

Well, I—I beg your pardon, Mr. Lincoln. I didn't mean to do so.

LINCOLN.

(*Quickly.*) Oh, I don't mind—I mean, ever since the first day I set eyes on you, I been meaning to tell you not to be so blamed formal, but I never seemed to get the chance.

MARY.

(*Smiling.*) Well, then, I shall call you “Abe.”

LINCOLN.

And—may I have your permission to call you . . . Mary?

MARY.

Yes. Of course.

LINCOLN.

I thank you. It must seem peculiarsome for a galoot like me to be talking this way, but I been meaning to tell you not to bother with the “mister.” It seemed, though, like every time I'd just get set to mention it, up would pop Steve Douglas—he seemed to be with you a mighty lot.

MARY.

There are other gentlemen in Springfield whose company I prefer to Mr. Douglas'. . . Are you . . . are you coming to Ninian's house tonight—to see Dick?

LINCOLN.

I wasn't going to, but I reckon now I will. . . .

MARY.

Most likely I shall be there to say good evening. But I must go now. Good-bye and thank you again—Abe.

[*She smiles at him, and exits.*

(LINCOLN stands looking after her for a moment; then he goes slowly to his desk and sits down. He stares straight ahead, thinking. He sits thus for several moments. Then there is a knock at door R.)

LINCOLN.

(*Starting out of his reverie.*) Come in. (*Enter*

BILLY.) Oh, it's you, Billy. I didn't expect you to knock.

BILLY.

(*Heavily sarcastic.*) Has her majesty, Miss Todd, gone? If she *has*, I'll get back to work.

LINCOLN.

What's the matter, Billy? Have you and Miss Todd been having words again?

BILLY.

(*Sitting at his table.*) She ordered me out of the office when she saw you coming. Miss Todd and I have never gotten on particularly well.

LINCOLN.

No, since the night you told her she danced like a snake, she hasn't thought very highly of you.

BILLY.

I meant it for a compliment.

LINCOLN.

I know, but she didn't take it that way.

BILLY.

She said she had private business to speak to you about. But I expect I know what it was, and it's far from being private any more, if I may say so, Mr. Lincoln. All of Springfield's got it.

LINCOLN.

You mean about Dick Elliot?

BILLY.

Yes.

LINCOLN.

(*Rising and going to window.*) Yes, it was about him that Miss Todd wanted to see me. You mustn't be too critical of her, Billy, even though her ways are a little high-handed. I have a great regard for her.

BILLY.

(*Quietly.*) Yes, I've noticed you were becoming increasingly attracted by her.

LINCOLN.

I'd hardly put it that way, Billy.

BILLY.

Pardon me for saying so, Mr. Lincoln, but I firmly believe Miss Mary Todd is a designing person and would use anyone to gain her own ends.

LINCOLN.

Yes, Billy?

BILLY.

Has she persuaded you to take on Doc Elliot's defense?

LINCOLN.

She asked me if I would do what I could to untangle him from a terrible situation, and I, after seeing that he really needed help, gladly accepted. I hope I shall be able to justify her apparent faith in me, but things don't look promising.

BILLY.

No, they don't. Half of Springfield's in favor of hanging him and the other half wants him run out of town. I saw a big crowd out after him, and a mob's dangerous, Mr. Lincoln. They've strung up more than one innocent man.

LINCOLN.

A vigilance committee, with Potter Eldred at the head, is sitting tomorrow at a mock trial. They haven't given us much time.

BILLY.

What are you going to do?

LINCOLN.

I don't know. A little thinking, I reckon. (*He sits chair E, and puts his feet on the desk.*)

BILLY.

Shall I go on with my work, or had you rather I left?

LINCOLN.

(*Picking up newspaper left by MARY, and opening it.*)
No, Billy, go right on copying those notes. You've visited the tavern enough for today.

BILLY.

Er—yes, sir. (*He turns and begins to write.*)

LINCOLN.

(*After reading a moment.*) Here's an editorial written up about my speech the other night.

BILLY.

(*Eagerly.*) Is it good?

LINCOLN.

Not particularly. (*He reads.*) "Mr. Lincoln's argument was truly ingenious. He has, however, a sort of assumed clownishness in his manner which does not become him, and which does not truly belong to him. Mr. Lincoln will sometimes make his language correspond with this clownish manner, and he can thus frequently raise a loud laugh among his Whig hearers; but this entire game of buffoonery convinces the *mind* of no man, and we seriously advise Mr. Lincoln to correct this clownish fault before it grows upon him." Well, there you are, Billy. . . . Maybe they're right . . . far be it from me to gainsay the opinions of the worthy editor—even though it happens to be Potter Eldred. (*He turns the page and glances over it.*) Hello, I see Jeff Mathews has lost his skiff. Says he reckons it most likely broke loose, but may have been stolen.

BILLY.

Yes, he was down at the saloon calling everyone's attention to the fact that his name was in the paper. Says he's getting as much notoriety as Dick Elliot, and in a safer way.

LINCOLN.

The boat's fully described, so someone ought to pick it up. Painted white . . . black stripe . . . both oars mended. . . . Most likely broke mooring all right. (*He is about to turn the sheet again, when something else catches his eye. He pauses and reads carefully. He is thoughtful for a moment. Then he folds the paper. Rises.*) Billy, I'm going out for a time—I may be gone over night. Go and see Miss Todd this evening, and offer my apologies for not coming, and tell her that I'll be back in time for the sitting of the committee tomorrow.

BILLY.

Where are you going, Mr. Lincoln?

LINCOLN.

(*Placing the paper in his hat, and putting the hat on.*) I'll be back, Billy. Be sure and tell Miss Todd. . . . (*He crosses to door R. and exits, leaving BILLY looking after him, puzzled.*)

THE CURTAIN FALLS

SCENE 2.—*The same.*TIME.—*The next day. Three-thirty o'clock in the afternoon.*

(*At rise of Curtain: EDWARDS, MARY and FRANCES are grouped around door L., which is open. They are listening to ELDRED'S VOICE which comes up from the courtroom below. The vigilance committee is sitting at the "trial," and ELDRED is addressing the people gathered, both as the jury and as spectators.*)

ELDRED'S VOICE.

(*Off.*) We of Springfield are an honest, upright, and kindly people. We open our arms to the stranger and clasp him to our breast. Nowhere—nowhere in all the West will one find the clean, warm-hearted, sincere and

unselfish hospitality to be enjoyed for the asking in this, the fairest of all the fair cities of our great state of Illinois! (*Applause.*) We are a long-suffering people—we will endure much—but when our hospitality is inexcusably and intentionally abused by ungrateful blackguards and scoundrels, our kindness turns to righteous wrath and indignation, and our warmth freezes cold in our veins. Then—*then* let the offender beware! Then we can be harsh and hard, and we are not ashamed to say that many a brazen culprit has turned ashen in the face of our fury, and begged on his knees for mercy. But we show no mercy! We deal harshly with those who, for our deeds of kindness, give us back nothing but deeds of meanness. But—and this, my friends, is true above all things—harshly as we may deal with the criminal, we are *just* in our dealings! (*Applause.*) The man with whom we now have a score to settle has set himself up as our doctor, and as such has been with us for nearly a year. In that time we have trusted our lives and the lives of our children in his hands. We have had faith in him. And for that faith and trust, he gives us back nothing but absolute and unadulterated *crime*! The greatest of *all* crimes—MURDER! And he hopes that he may yet practice more of his infamous deeds in our midst. But, Richard Elliot, YOU ARE WRONG! The doctor, who through carelessness or intention loses the life of a patient, is nothing *less* than a murderer, and we of Springfield have a way of *dealing* with murderers!

(*Loud and prolonged applause.*)

FRANCES.

Shut the door, Ninian! I can't listen any more—I can't—I *can't*! (*She crosses R., distracted.*)

(EDWARDS *shuts door.*)

MARY.

(*Following her.*) Frances, dear, please . . .

FRANCES.

(*Desperately.*) Mary, they'll never believe him—never

—even if he's given a chance to speak! What shall we do?

MARY.

There's nothing we can do—yet.

EDWARDS.

(*Alt door.*) We've got to wait for Abe—he's our only hope against Potter Eldred.

FRANCES.

(*Going to him.*) Yes, but where is he—where? He promised to be at this so-called trial to defend Dick, and here it is the day—the hour—and no one knows where he is or when he'll be back.

EDWARDS.

He said he'd be here, and if Abe said it, he meant it. He doesn't make promises he has no intention of keeping. In New Salem they used to call him "Honest Abe Lincoln"—and rightly, too.

FRANCES.

I've heard that a hundred times—but where is he? Where is he *now*?

MARY.

He'll come—I'm *sure* he'll come.

EDWARDS.

We haven't any choice but to wait. Perhaps Josh'll find him—he's been gone over an hour. Sit down, both of you. Try to be calm. (*He sits chair E.*)

MARY.

(*Scornfully. Sitting chair C.*) Calm! A time like this, and you talk of being calm!

FRANCES.

(*Going to window.*) Ninian, how can you! (*She wrings her hands.*)

(*There is a pause. EDWARDS taps his foot a moment nervously. Then . . .*)

EDWARDS.

Abe's been mighty attentive lately, Mary. Are you expecting anything to come of it?

MARY.

(*Impatiently.*) What do you mean?

EDWARDS.

Do you think he'll ask you to marry him?

MARY.

I've—I've not thought about it one way or another.

EDWARDS.

Will you if he does?

MARY.

I've no idea! Must we talk about it now, Ninian?

EDWARDS.

No, I suppose not. Just trying to make conversation. Elizabeth will object, you know.

MARY.

(*With spirit.*) If Mr. Lincoln should ask me to marry him, and I decide to do so, Elizabeth's objections won't interfere in the least with my plans.

EDWARDS.

Oh, then you *have* been thinking about it!

MARY.

I don't know!—Never mind! (*There is another pause. MARY sits for a moment; then with a gesture of impatience she rises and comes down R., tapping the handle of her parasol nervously in the palm of her other hand.*) I wonder what he's saying now?

FRANCES.

I'd rather not know! It's too terrible!

MARY.

I *want* to know! We may as well be prepared for the worst! (*She crosses to door L.*)

EDWARDS.

No, Mary, don't! What's the use of tormenting ourselves?

MARY.

It's worse torment not to know what's going on below. (*She opens the door, and ELDRED'S VOICE comes up.*)

ELDRED'S VOICE.

(*Off.*) We have investigated the whole matter carefully and it is our conviction that Elliot, by performing this needless brain operation, killed in cold blood that harmless and innocent man known by us all as Old Rip; and not daring to admit his terrible crime, this resourceful young man disposed of the body by throwing it into the river—not a hundred yards from the door of Rip's cabin—hoping that by the time the body was discovered, no one would connect the operation and the dead man. But in carrying out his scheme, he allowed the blue bandanna handkerchief, which the old man always carried, to fall to the ground, and thus his crime was exposed by those of us who had sharpness enough to detect this fatal clue. What would you call *this*, ladies and gentlemen, if not a story of *murder*!

(*Angry murmurs of the crowd.*)

MARY.

(*Shutting the door.*) The biggest crime is that man's speech! He'll pay for this!

FRANCES.

He'll never pay if Mr. Lincoln doesn't come!

EDWARDS.

He'll come. Don't give up; there's still time. Get Eldred talking, and he'll go on for an hour. (*He goes up to window with FRANCES.*)

MARY.

Ninian . . .

EDWARDS.

Yes?

MARY.

Do you think it possible that Herndon is keeping something back—instructions of some sort that Mr. Lincoln might have left for us?

EDWARDS.

No, Mary, I don't think it's likely. Billy's as puzzled are we are.

MARY.

All the same, I think you should question him.

EDWARDS.

I have, and I'm sure he's told us all he knows.

FRANCES.

He'd never keep back anything in a situation like this.

EDWARDS.

Here comes Josh—he's running!

FRANCES.

(*Rushing to door R.*) Perhaps he's found him!

MARY.

Open the door quickly! (*She follows.*)

EDWARDS.

Give him time to get up the stairs!

(*Enter SPEED, breathing heavily.*)

SPEED.

Is he here?

EDWARDS.

No, haven't you found him?

SPEED.

Not a trace!

(FRANCES turns away, desperately.)

EDWARDS.

Where'd you go?

SPEED.

I rode nearly to New Salem, and he was nowhere along the way. No one had seen him—no one knew where he could be!

MARY.

(*Flaring up and screaming.*) He can't have disappeared into thin air! He must be *somewhere*! *Joshua Speed, why didn't you find him?—Go back and look until you do!*

EDWARDS.

(*Hastily.*) Mary, Mary, be quiet!

MARY.

(*Raging.*) *Where is he—why isn't he here?*

EDWARDS.

(*Sternly.*) For God's sake, be still! It won't do any good to have a tantrum!

SPEED.

I did my best, Miss Todd. I don't know where else to look.

EDWARDS.

You did all right, Josh. We've just got to wait.

MARY.

(*Impatiently.*) Wait! *Wait!* WAIT!

SPEED.

I stopped everywhere along the New Salem road. Have they begun the trial?

EDWARDS.

Yes.

SPEED.

What's happened?

EDWARDS.

Nothing yet, but I'm afraid for the outcome unless Abe gets here. Even then it may turn out badly for Dick.

MARY.

(*Suddenly quiet.*) Mr. Speed, I—apologize for my fit of temper.

SPEED.

No apology required, Miss Todd. We're all on edge, and no wonder.

FRANCES.

If Mr. Lincoln doesn't come soon, I'm going down there myself and talk to the people.

EDWARDS.

You'll do no such thing—you may be hurt.

MARY.

I will!

EDWARDS.

No, nor you either!

(*Enter BILLY, door L. As he opens door, ELDRED'S VOICE is heard.*)

ELDRED'S VOICE.

(*Off.*) If we allow these crimes to go unavenged, only God knows what tragedy will visit us next. This man must not be allowed to stay amongst us, nor must he ever practice medicine again . . .

(*BILLY shuts door.*)

BILLY.

Has he come yet?

EDWARDS.

Not yet, Billy.

BILLY.

There's going to be trouble, Mr. Edwards. Eldred's talking them into doing a hanging, and they don't know it.

FRANCES.

(*Fearfully.*) Will they dare go that far?

BILLY.

If something doesn't stop them!

FRANCES.

They mustn't!—Ninian, what'll we do!

EDWARDS.

(*To BILLY.*) How soon do you think trouble's likely to start?

BILLY.

Not until Eldred finishes talking; I'm sure of that. (*He goes to door and opens it.*)

ELDRED'S VOICE.

(*Off.*) . . . to bear out our case further, Mr. Abraham Lincoln, who was to be here as lawyer for the defense, has failed to put in an appearance. This can mean only one thing: He *has* no defense! There is nothing to be said for this man, and Lincoln—clever lawyer that he is—knew it. We of Springfield . . .

BILLY.

(*Shutting door.*) When he stops, I don't know . . .

EDWARDS.

He's making the most of Abe's not coming.

SPEED.

Yes.

EDWARDS.

Josh, it looks as though you and I had best be prepared to do something.

SPEED.

I'm ready.

BILLY.

So am I.

FRANCES.

Let me go down and talk to them ——

EDWARDS.

No, Frances, you mustn't ——

MARY.

I'll go —— (*She rushes to door L. and flings it open.*)

ELDRED'S VOICE.

(*Off.*) . . . drastic action to deal with this terrible crime ——

LINCOLN'S VOICE.

(*Drawling. Off.*) Just a minute, Potter! May I say something?

MARY.

(*Leaning for support on the door casing.*) Thank God! I knew he'd come!

BLACKOUT

SCENE 3.—*The courtroom beneath the law office.*

TIME.—*Immediately following the preceding scene.*

(*Instantly the lights go out on the preceding scene, the Curtain falls. LINCOLN steps before the Curtain, and a spotlight picks him up at c. He speaks as if addressing the people of the courtroom.*)

LINCOLN.

I reckon you're wondering how I happen to be here, and why, being here, I should come right on up and interrupt that worthy gentleman, Mr. Potter Eldred. In the first place, I'm here to defend a man's name—and what's more

important, his life—against a hot-headed crowd, who in the name of justice is ready to commit a crime greater than that of which my client, Dick Elliot, is accused. A few years back, when I was riding the circuit, a fellow was brought into court charged with sheep killing, and upon being asked by the court, “Are you guilty or not guilty?” the fellow said, “I stands mute.” On trial, the case was decided against him, but he was told by the court that he could carry it higher up to the Court of Errors if he wished. The fellow muttered, “If *this* ain’t a court of errors, I’d like to know where you can find one!” Now right here is what you might call a court of errors, also. In the light of evidence which I am about to produce, we might go so far as to say it’s one big error. You’re charging a man with murder when you have no right to do so, there being no body upon which to base your charge. The charge then is an illegal one, but it is none the less dangerous for that. You’re a vigilance committee who has decided to be—for once—just. By “just” I mean you talk about your victim a while before you hang him. You’ve already found your prisoner guilty on suspicion alone, and on suspicion and the discovery of a blue bannanna handkerchief you’re ready to string him to the nearest tree — Oh, yes, Jeff Matthews, I saw the length of rope you have under your seat. This form of reasoning is not unpopular. In Mississippi they first commenced by hanging regular gamblers—a set of men certainly not following for a livelihood a very useful or honest occupation, but one which, so far from being forbidden by the laws, was actually licensed by an act of the Legislature passed a single year before. Next, negroes suspected of conspiring to raise an insurrection were caught up and hanged in all parts of the state; then white men supposed to be leagued with the negroes; and finally strangers from neighboring states, going thither on business, were in many instances subjected to the same fate. When men take it into their heads to hang gamblers—or murderers—they should recollect that in the confusion usually attending such transactions they will be as likely to hang someone who is neither a gambler nor a murderer as one who is, and that, acting upon the example set, the mob of tomorrow

may, and probably will, hang some of them by the very same mistake. Springfield, Illinois, today came mighty close to following the example set by Mississippi. Under no circumstances can you hang Dick Elliot for murder—not because *he* committed no murder, but *because there was no murder committed!* It all began with an item in the newspaper—the same paper which contained the malicious hints of Dick’s guilt. I opened the copy of the “Sangamo Journal” and read this: (*He takes a folded newspaper from his pocket and reads.*) “Lost, light skiff, white, black stripe, both oars mended. Probably broke mooring and drifted down-river. Finder contact J. Matthews, care the ‘Sangamo Journal.’” I was about to turn the page when I saw *this* directly beneath the other. “Discovered on river bank near Godbey’s Hook, white skiff, black stripe, both oars broken at place of mending. Owner apply ‘Sangamo Journal.’” It was unlikely that there were two skiffs answering so closely this description, and the fact that the one in question had been found near Godbey’s Hook, *above* Springfield, would indicate that Jeff’s skiff did not drift away, as it could not have *drifted upstream!* Therefore, it must have been rowed by someone, and I decided that I’d find out who that person was, for if it proved to be the man I hoped it to be, my client would be cleared of all suspicion. I rode to Godbey’s Hook and found the man, and brought him back with me—to introduce the only solid piece of evidence this court has seen so far. I brought him back so that you might know Dick Elliot is *not* a murderer either by accident or intent, but a mighty clever young doctor. For he cured a man’s mind, and the man, after years of blackness, suddenly regained his senses on the sixth day after a serious operation to save his life. He immediately set out to find the woman whose name had been in his mind for so long, but his boat gave out at Godbey’s Hook, and not being at all recovered from his illness, he gave out also, and I found him there. Dick Elliot came mighty close to being hanged, and after the hanging you’d have all gone home, satisfied with having performed a service to your country. For my client, and for the lady who is to become his wife, I’m sorry this all happened; but for

you, the citizens of Springfield, I'm glad. Now, Jeff, you better take that rope home and use it for some good purpose—on your skiff maybe. And, Rip, if you feel able, you better stand up and let the folks see you so they'll know I ain't been telling 'em a yarn. . . .

BLACKOUT

SCENE 4.—*The law office again.*

TIME.—*The action is continuous.*

(At rise of Curtain: [Immediately the spotlight goes out, LINCOLN quickly leaves the stage; the stage lights come full up instantly, and the Curtain rises without a pause.] LINCOLN is just entering door L. The persons who were on stage in SCENE 2 are still there, in nearly the same position. As LINCOLN enters, FRANCES goes to him, and the others group around him with the exception of MARY, who goes quietly up to window. The murmur of the crowd below can be heard when the door is open.)

FRANCES.

(Tearfully.) Mr. Lincoln, we—we thought you weren't coming—I was so afraid! And then you *did* ——

EDWARDS.

Abe, you've taught Springfield a lesson we won't forget!

SPEED.

By Jing, I'll bet Potter Eldred won't hold his head up for a year!

BILLY.

(Joyfully.) Won't we have it on him, though!

FRANCES.

You saved his life, Mr. Lincoln—you saved Dick's life!

EDWARDS.

Yes, Abe, I reckon you did. You came just in time; things were looking bad.

LINCOLN.

I'm sorry I timed it so close, but it was a tolerable long ride to Godbey's Hook, and Rip was ailing some, and we had to ride back slow.

SPEED.

You know what, Abe? We were just going down and try to *lick* some sense into the crowd!

EDWARDS.

You've put sense into their heads, Abe, in a way they won't forget.

LINCOLN.

(*Smiling.*) Miss Frances, there's a young fellow down there in the courtroom waiting to see you.

EDWARDS.

Why doesn't Dick come up?

BILLY.

Probably he can't get away from the crowd.

SPEED.

That's the way they are! Cut your throat one minute and carry you on their shoulders the next.

EDWARDS.

How's Rip?

LINCOLN.

Ready to rest for a spell before moving on again. He shouldn't have tried what he did—it was too much for him. Dick's taking him back to his old shack for a while to make sure he's all right.

FRANCES.

May I go down, Mr. Lincoln?

LINCOLN.

Reckon you better, Miss Frances, before Dick sends a delegation up after you. You'd better hurry, too—he'll be going along with Rip when the crowd will let him.

BILLY.

Shall I go with you, Miss Todd, and get you through the commotion?

LINCOLN.

Good idea, Billy.

FRANCES.

Thank you, Mr. Herndon. Please, let's hurry ——

[FRANCES and BILLY exit, door L.

EDWARDS.

Is Dick really back in the good graces of the people, Abe?

LINCOLN.

By the way they're piling congratulations onto him, I reckon he is, Ninian, and his practice ought to double.

SPEED.

That was a humdinger of a speech you made!

LINCOLN.

Thanks, Josh.

EDWARDS.

It was a real bit of luck that you happened on that newspaper item the way you did, Abe, and followed it up.

LINCOLN.

It was pure good fortune, Ninian. If I hadn't been lucky, Dick might have been swinging now. It was providential, too, that on the day the fellow in Godbey's Hook found the skiff he had business here in Springfield. He came into town and went right to the "Journal" office and put the notice in.

SPEED.

How did it happen Rip headed straight for the river that way?

LINCOLN.

I don't know, and he doesn't know himself. Reckon because he's been living within a few steps of it for seven years.

EDWARDS.

I've been thinking, you know, and it seems to me the people of Springfield might take up a collection to get him started anew in life. I'll begin right now with twenty-five dollars. (*He takes some bills from his pocket.*)

SPEED.

Fine idea, Ninian! (*He takes out some money—two silver dollars.*) Here's a couple of cart-wheels from me.

LINCOLN.

Afraid I can't afford much more than a dollar, Ninian, but here's all I got at present. (*He hands a bill to EDWARDS.*)

EDWARDS.

Thanks, Abe. Who else can we get?

(*Enter ELDRED, door L.*)

LINCOLN.

(*Quietly.*) Hold on; I reckon I see a prospect. (*Crossing L.*) Well, Potter, have you come up to make arrangements for that libel suit?

ELDRED.

(*Considerably less oratorical than before.*) Now see here, Abe, can't we talk this over?

LINCOLN.

What is there to talk over, Potter?

ELDRED.

I admit I was a little hasty—maybe even a little unfair—but I say, why hold grudges over a little mistake? Now, can't we all shake hands and forget the whole thing?

SPEED.

This will take a lot of forgetting, Eldred. You came mighty close to having Dick Elliot hanged.

ELDRED.

(*Going R., so LINCOLN is at his L., and EDWARDS and SPEED are at his R. Greatly injured.*) Why, how you talk, Josh. I had no such intention—no such intention whatever! Well, Abe, how about it, eh?

LINCOLN.

(*Ignoring the outstretched hand.*) No, Potter, I don't see that there's anything to shake hands on, or talk over. You'll be hearing from me when Dick lets me know what action he wants taken.

ELDRED.

Now, just a minute. Couldn't—could we—ahem!—couldn't we settle this out of court?

LINCOLN.

(*He apparently thinks deeply for a moment.*) Well, I'll tell you, Potter. We're taking up a collection for Rip, and if you could bring yourself to making a sizeable contribution, Dick might be willing to drop the case.

ELDRED.

(*Willingly.*) Why, yes, yes, of course, Abe! Glad to do it, glad to do it! (*He reaches in his pocket.*) Here, here's twenty-five dollars.

LINCOLN.

I said a *sizeable* contribution, Potter.

ELDRED.

Eh? Oh, yes. Well, here . . . (*He reaches in again.*) Here's twenty-five more.

(LINCOLN looks over ELDRED's head at SPEED and EDWARDS. They both shake their heads quietly.)

LINCOLN.

Well, Potter, fifty dollars might settle the case *out of*

court, but it'll take another twenty-five to make Dick forget all about it.

ELDRED.

It's robbery, Lincoln, and you know it—it's nothing more than a hold-up! *I won't pay it!*

LINCOLN.

(Elaborately indifferent.) Suit yourself, Potter.

ELDRED.

(Hastily reconsidering.) All right, all right, all right!

LINCOLN.

(Taking more bills and passing them to EDWARDS.)
There, Ninian, that should make a mighty good beginning.

SPEED.

Who else can we collect from, Abe?

LINCOLN.

(To c. Slyly.) I'd suggest that you see if Mrs. Armstrong wouldn't like to contribute something. I don't think she'll object very strongly. . . .

SPEED.

A good idea! Come along, Ninian!

(They go to door L.)

ELDRED.

(Hastily.) Gentlemen, gentlemen, wait a minute——

SPEED.

She's got to pay, too, Potter!

[SPEED and EDWARDS *exit*, door L.]

ELDRED.

(Following them.) Bessie won't like it—how much do you want? I'll give you another fifty——

[*He exits*, door L.]

(LINCOLN *crosses, smiling, and closes the door after them*. MARY, *who has been standing at window*

looking out, all through this, turns. When LINCOLN turns from door, they are face to face. They look at each other for a moment.)

MARY.

(*Quietly.*) I'm grateful, Abe.

LINCOLN.

So am I, Mary.

MARY.

Why?

LINCOLN.

For having the chance to help you and your family. It does a man good to be of some service to the woman he particularly admires.

MARY.

(*Sitting on bench.*) Do you admire me, Abe?

LINCOLN.

(*Going up to her.*) Yes, I do, Mary. This is a peculiar time to tell you, but I want to get it out before my courage fails me. I been meaning to say it for a long time. I have a great regard for you. I know I have no right to even hope that you could ever love me—I'm a poor backwoods lawyer, hardly knowing where my next meal's coming from. I'm in debt to my ears and lazy, and certainly I'm nothing to look at. (*He sits end of couch.*) But in spite of that, Mary, I'm—I'm asking you to be my wife.

MARY.

(*Simply.*) I thank you, Abe, and I will

LINCOLN.

Did I—did I hear you right?

MARY.

Yes, you heard me. I'll be your wife, and be glad and proud that I am. You said just now that you admired me. I admire *you*—I admire you more than any man I know, and I love you. And I know there's something in-

side of you that's great—and bound to be greater. I know it!

LINCOLN.

The only thing great about me are my ears.

MARY.

I'm serious, Abe. And I'm ambitious, too. Frances says I'm too ambitious, and perhaps she's right. I used to be ambitious for myself; now I'm ambitious for you.

LINCOLN.

I'm not a very enterprising fellow, Mary. I'll always be a poor man, I reckon, and you'll have to share my poverty. Do you think you could, and not mind?

MARY.

You'll not always be poor; and I'm willing to share anything with you.

LINCOLN.

I'm glad you said that, Mary.

MARY.

Abe, I want to ask you something.

LINCOLN.

Yes, Mary?

MARY.

(*She rises and comes down R.*) Abe, have you ever heard anything inside of you, like voices, calling your name and waiting for you to answer . . . as if they were pointing the way for you to follow. . . .

LINCOLN.

(*Rising and coming down beside her.*) No, Mary, I never have.

MARY.

You may think me mad, but since I met you I've heard them calling your name. They've awakened me at night, voices calling out so clearly, "Abraham! Abraham Lincoln!" They frightened me at first, but not any more.

LINCOLN.

(*Smiling.*) I've never heard 'em, Mary. What do they mean?

MARY.

You're laughing at me. Please don't. I believe in them. They're calling you to lead them. They're telling you your destiny, Abe.

LINCOLN.

(*Softly.*) When I was a young man, and lived back in New Salem, I used to lie at night on my back on the bank of the Sangamon River, and look up at the deep, black sky and the stars. And I used to wonder a lot, and sometimes I'd imagine things. The wind in the trees, or the river lapping on the bank, would talk to me. It used to tell me things. Once it told me I would meet a terrible end . . . and I've been afraid . . . ever since. But it never told me I was destined for great things—and I'm glad it didn't, because I don't want 'em, Mary.

MARY.

(*Looking up at him with deep earnestness.*) But I want them for you, and I'll see that they come to you. You smiled just now when I told you about the voices—but they must mean something—I'm sure they must. And if you don't hear them yourself, I'll listen and hear them for you, and I'll guide you. And you'll be great, Abe. . . .

(*A pause. . . .*)

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT III

SCENE I.—*The same.*

TIME.—*More than a year after the preceding scene. The middle of a bleak, winter morning.*

(*At rise of Curtain: The stage is empty. Then there is a knock at door R., and FRANCES and ELLIOT enter. ELLIOT is carrying a great, flat parcel, carefully and elaborately wrapped . . . presumably a silver tray. FRANCES hovers about him as they come into the office. Both are dressed in their "best clothes" as if for some festive occasion.*)

FRANCES.

Over here, Dick, dear—on the desk. There!

(*They cross L., and ELLIOT puts the tray down carefully on LINCOLN'S desk.*)

ELLIOT.

Is it safe and sound? I did my best.

FRANCES.

(*Rearranging the bow.*) It's lovely, Dick, and I know Abe will be delighted with it. It was the nicest silver tray they had, and the most expensive. I sent way to Boston for it. But after what Abe did for you, he deserves the nicest wedding present we can get him.

ELLIOT.

(*Going up to window.*) Wonder where he is?

FRANCES.

Perhaps at Mr. Speed's store—enjoying a last orgy of story-telling as a bachelor.

ELLIOT.

It isn't Josh's store now; he sold out yesterday.

FRANCES.

That wouldn't matter to Abe. Wherever there's someone to listen, he'll tell a story.

ELLIOT.

I don't see him anywhere. We may as well wait.

FRANCES.

(*Turning away.*) You know, Dick, I—I feel a little—miserable today.

ELLIOT.

(*Coming down from window.*) Why, Frances, what's the matter?

FRANCES.

I don't know. (*She laughs.*) I'm foolish, I suppose. But helping Mary get ready, and seeing her so terribly happy and expectant—it's made me think how far away my wedding is.

ELLIOT

(*Taking her in his arms.*) Darling! It won't be long. Why, the way my practice has picked up in the last year since that trouble we had—we'll be able to get married soon.

FRANCES.

Will we, Dick?

ELLIOT.

Of course we will. You'll soon be naming the day. I'm saving, and my practice is bigger than it ever was. Don't feel blue because Mary's beating you by a little—you'll soon be a married woman yourself.

FRANCES.

(*Hugging him happily.*) Oh, Dick! Dick! (*She releases him; feels in his inside coat pocket.*) What's that in your coat?

ELLIOT.

So you've already begun, have you? I can see nothing is going to be safe from you. (*He takes a letter from*

his pocket.) It's a letter from Rip—the first I've had since he went back over a year ago. He's in his home town again, and he's married that woman he was always talking about—Nancy her name was, remember?

FRANCES.

(*Happily.*) She was really waiting for him after seven years?

ELLIOT.

Yes, she was waiting. This is what he writes. (*Reading.*) "Dear friend Dick:—You find me the happiest of men. I returned here in a fever of anguish lest my Nancy had forgotten me, but such was not the case. The dear lady had always felt that I would return, although she could not explain my strange disappearance, and for seven years had waited faithfully for me. We were married some little time ago. It has been my regret that I caused you so much uneasiness, and I am eternally grateful for the miracle you performed upon me. My best wishes to you and your lady, and my regards to the kind gentleman, Mr. Abraham Lincoln, who acted as your lawyer. Also, to all those in Springfield who were so good to me. Yours faithfully, Jasper F. Whittaker."

FRANCES.

It's a nice letter. Jasper F. Whittaker—was that his real name?

ELLIOT.

Yes, he forgot that along with everything else, so we called him "Rip" for want of something better.

FRANCES.

He must be very happy.

ELLIOT.

I reckon he is—he deserves to be.

FRANCES.

I hope things turn out as well for Abe and Mary.

ELLIOT.

So do I, and I don't see why they shouldn't.

FRANCES.

I'm glad they're getting married. I was so afraid Mary was going to allow Elizabeth to influence her when it came to taking a husband. But I should have known better; Mary has a mind of her own.

ELLIOT.

She's getting a fine man when she gets Abe, and Abe's getting a fine girl.

FRANCES.

Yes, Mary is a fine girl, but she's an ambitious one. Do you suppose she'll drive Abe, and make him miserable?

ELLIOT.

It would take considerable pressure to bother him much. Driving won't hurt him any—do him good.

FRANCES.

You say that because you're ambitious, too, Dick. Abe isn't. He'll be good to Mary and faithful, and I'm glad she didn't refuse him in preference to a pompous little fashion-plate like Steve Douglas. But Abe's going to be a trial to her in many ways, and she to him. She loves him because she sees strength and fineness in him—which is what any woman should see in the man she marries—but she'll spend her life dissatisfied unless she can push him forward. She'll never rest so long as he can go ahead. I know Mary.

ELLIOT.

(*Crossing R., sitting chair C.*) Yes, and I know Abe. He'll listen to her, and if he doesn't choose to do as she suggests, he'll just laugh, tell her a story, and won't do it.

FRANCES.

He listened the other night, but instead of laughing and

making a joke, he got up from his chair and left the house.

ELLIOT.

What do you mean?

FRANCES.

Mary was entertaining him, and they began to discuss the slavery question. Suddenly he got up and left, without saying a word.

ELLIOT.

What did Mary say?

FRANCES.

Before he went, she was telling him that he ought not to sit back and let slavery spread into the new territories. After he left she didn't say a word.

ELLIOT.

Poor Abe! He must get tired of listening to people's advice, and hearing them tell him what he ought and ought not to do.

FRANCES.

He came back the next night and apologized.

ELLIOT.

Of course he did. Abe's mighty fond of Mary. They'll get along fine. What one has the other hasn't, and they ought to just hitch.

(Enter BILLY, door R. He is laden down with a great square bundle, not too carefully wrapped. He carries it in his arms, and stops in the doorway with it. He is dressed carefully in his best clothes.)

BILLY.

Howdy, Miss Frances; howdy, Dick.

FRANCES.

Hello, Mr. Herndon.

ELLIOT.

(*Rising.*) Howdy, Billy. What have you there?

BILLY.

(*Crossing L. and placing the bundle on desk.*) Wedding present for Mr. Lincoln. I hesitate to say it's a present for Miss Todd, too.

ELLIOT.

(*Crossing L.*) What is it, Billy?

BILLY.

(*Beginning to unwrap the bundle carefully.*) I picked it out especially because I thought Mr. Lincoln might like it. Perhaps Miss Todd will deign to tell the time by it, also. (*He completes the unwrapping, and stands back proudly.*) There, ain't that a beauty?

(*It is a large clock—an elaborate monstrosity of the type popular in the 1850's. BILLY is obviously extremely proud of his purchase.*)

FRANCES.

It's very nice.

ELLIOT.

It sure is, Billy.

BILLY.

Mr. Speed had it in the store for I don't know how long, and when he sold out he let me have it real reasonable.

FRANCES.

I'm sure Mr. Lincoln will like it.

ELLIOT.

Do you know where he is?

BILLY.

(*Wrapping the bundle again.*) No, but I reckon he's out wandering around. He seemed pretty nervous when I was talking to him last night.

ELLIOT.

Remember you get married only once! It must be sort of terrifying.

BILLY.

I'm glad he's finally doing it. You know, he almost married that Miss Owens from Kentucky. He wrote her a letter, but nothing came of it. I think Mr. Lincoln was glad she never answered, and in some respects, so was I. I don't care greatly for Miss Todd—begging your pardon, Miss Frances—but I admit she has a great redeeming feature. She feels the same, from what I can gather, about Mr. Lincoln's duty to his country as I do. Given an ambitious wife he may be shaken into doing something worthwhile.

(*Enter SPEED, door R. Like the others, he is carefully dressed.*)

SPEED.

Howdy, folks. Where's Abe?

ELLIOT.

Nobody knows. Billy says he's probably walking.

BILLY.

I wouldn't be surprised if he was out on the edge of town near the river. He goes there sometimes.

SPEED.

I ought to find him. Ninian sent me around to make sure he was on hand. (*He looks at his watch.*) There's only an hour before the wedding and he should be getting down to the Edwards' place. You know Abe—get him telling a yarn and he'd miss his own funeral.

ELLIOT.

Unless someone reminds him, it wouldn't surprise me if he missed his own wedding.

FRANCES.

(*Going to c.*) Abe's pleased that you're staying over, Mr. Speed.

SPEED.

I figured it wouldn't hurt to put off going to Kentucky a few days. Abe's been a good friend of mine since that first day he come into the store, and I ain't aiming on letting him get married without my moral support.

BILLY.

He'll be glad of it, I reckon.

SPEED.

(*Consulting a slip of paper.*) Do you know if he's got the ring? I was to check on that, too.

BILLY.

He had it last night. He sat at his desk here and looked at it for a long time.

SPEED.

(*Looking at his watch again.*) I reckon I better go out and see if I can locate him. If he comes in tell him Ninian wants him right away. (*He makes a move up to door. Suddenly the door opens and LINCOLN stands there. He looks gloomy and his shoulders are stooped.*) Hello, Abe! I've been looking for you!

(*LINCOLN crosses silently to his desk without looking to right or left. He sits in chair E. He is wearing a long, black overcoat, his tall hat, and a woolen muffler.*)

ELLIOT.

Howdy, Abe! Is the bridegroom all ready?

(*No answer.*)

BILLY.

Ahem! (*He goes to desk and fusses with the clock.*) Mr. Lincoln—a wedding present from me——

FRANCES.

And the other one, Mr. Lincoln, from Dick and me.

LINCOLN.

(*Without turning to look at them.*) They're very nice . . . and I thank you. . . . (*Pause. Quietly.*) But there isn't going to be a wedding. . . .

SPEED.

How's that, Abe?

ELLIOT.

What do you mean?

LINCOLN.

Mary and I aren't going to get married. . . .

SPEED.

I thought that had been settled. You went to break it off once before and then at the last minute you didn't.

LINCOLN.

I know it, Josh, but I can't face it.

FRANCES.

When was this, Abe? When did you try to break it off?

SPEED.

Abe, don't be a fool! You can't slip out of it now—it's too late. You should have done it before. It'll kill Mary now if you don't go through with it.

LINCOLN.

(*Violently.*) It'll kill *me* if I do!

FRANCES.

But, Abe ——

LINCOLN.

(*He has risen and is at window.*) I know one thing . . . she loves me—I believe that. But her love for me and her damned ambition for me are so closely bound up that it frightens me! I can see it in everything she says and does, and everything she tells me! Does she love me

as I am—or does she love me for what she thinks she can make me?

FRANCES.

She has high hopes for you, Abe, and she believes in you. Any man Mary would have for a husband would *have* to have a future—and she believes you'll have a brilliant one.

LINCOLN.

The future! All I want is the present. I don't want to be always looking ahead discontentedly, and constantly striving for something I haven't got!

SPEED.

(*Quietly.*) You should have thought of that before, Abe. You had the chance then.

LINCOLN.

Think of it, Josh? That's all I have been thinking about. I've been walking all night, and I've thought of nothing else. Could the love I have for Mary survive the terrible hate I bear for her ambition? Not knowing that, I can't . . . marry her. . . .

SPEED.

Are you going to tell her that?

LINCOLN.

(*Coming down and sitting.*) No. If I see her, I'll take her in my arms just like I did before, and I mustn't! I've got to get away—by myself—and try to think the thing out.

SPEED.

You mean you're not going to the wedding?

LINCOLN.

That's what I mean. . . .

SPEED.

I've never seen you do a cowardly thing, Abe . . . until now.

LINCOLN.

I know it, Josh; it is a cowardly thing. I'm a coward and I'm running away—I know I'm running away.

BILLY.

Yes, you're running away from Miss Todd and you're running from the responsibilities you know to be yours as an American—and *she* knows they're yours, too, and that's why you're running from her.

SPEED.

(*Sharply.*) That'll do, Billy! (LINCOLN, *having paid no attention to BILLY's outburst, takes some papers out of his desk and puts them in his hat. He rises and goes to door R.*) Where are you going, Abe?

LINCOLN.

I don't know. Somewhere where I can think.

FRANCES.

(*Running to him.*) But, Abe, don't you see what a terrible thing this will do to Mary? Won't you go and see her?

LINCOLN.

No. I can't. (*He opens door R., exits, and closes it.*)

(*They stand, looking after his stooped, sad figure. There is a pause. . . .*)

THE CURTAIN FALLS

SCENE 2.—*The same.*TIME.—*Many weeks later. Evening.*

(*At rise of Curtain: BILLY is seated at his table R., bending over a pile of papers. Now and then he makes a note on a pad of paper. He rises, crosses to the bookshelves, selects a book, and returns with it to his desk. Then, before seating himself again,*

he opens the stove, peers in, takes the poker from the coal hod, and gives the fire several prods. He then rubs his hands together and, after a moment, goes up to the window, opens one of the bottom shutters and looks out. Outside there is darkness and cold. The lamp on BILLY'S table is lighted, and also one on LINCOLN'S desk. They make two pools of light, one on each side of the stage. The C. is quite dim. EDWARDS enters door R. It is cold, and he is well wrapped.)

BILLY.

Oh, 'evening, Mr. Edwards.

EDWARDS.

'Evening, Billy. Br-r-r! (*He rubs his hands and moves to stove.*) Freezing weather!

BILLY.

Getting colder.

EDWARDS.

Indeed it is. I dropped in to see if you'd heard anything from Abe today.

BILLY.

Nothing since the last letter over a month ago. The work here's getting beyond me, Mr. Edwards, and I don't mind admitting it.

EDWARDS.

What'll you do?

BILLY.

I don't know. Get in touch with Judge Stuart, I reckon, and close the office.

EDWARDS.

Does he know about Abe?

BILLY.

Yes, I got a letter yesterday asking when did I expect

Mr. Lincoln back. I had to write and say I didn't even know where he was.

EDWARDS.

(*Sitting chair C.*) Poor Abe! He's been going through a good many bad weeks, I'll be bound. His dreams are probably no more peaceful than Mary's.

BILLY.

How is Miss Todd?

EDWARDS.

She's all right, Billy, thanks. She doesn't go about so much as she did though. Tonight is the first time she's been out in a week. I brought her down to do a bit of shopping.

BILLY.

(*At window.*) I'll keep an eye on the sleigh and tell you when she's ready to go.

EDWARDS.

That's all right, don't bother. She'll only be a minute, and I'm going right down anyway.

BILLY.

(*Going to stove and using the poker again.*) I hope Mrs. Edwards is in good health?

EDWARDS.

Tolerable, Billy. She was badly upset over Abe and Mary, and hasn't quite recovered yet. To tell the truth, I've never forgiven Abe myself for what he did.

BILLY.

I was here that morning, Mr. Edwards, and he didn't know what he was doing.

EDWARDS.

That's what I told Elizabeth, but she says he might have at least come and spoken to Mary, and I suppose she's right. It was a cruel thing to leave the poor girl

waiting. Mary's high-strung, and you can imagine what it did to her. Abe shouldn't be proud of what he did.

BILLY.

I don't reckon he is, Mr. Edwards.

EDWARDS.

I don't reckon so either, Billy. He's probably been cursing himself ever since he went away.

BILLY.

What do you think his course of action will be when he comes back?

EDWARDS.

Heaven knows, Billy, I don't.

BILLY.

(*Sitting in chair A.*) Perhaps he won't come back. I've been wondering about that. Perhaps he'll stay on there with Mr. Speed in Kentucky.

EDWARDS.

No, I don't think you need fear that, Billy. Abe might run away and hide until he can think himself out of his despair and trouble, but when he's himself again he'll be back. I'm sure of it. This isn't the first time he's had to go away and wander around alone. It's happened before.

BILLY.

I'll be glad to see him in the office again.

EDWARDS.

Yes, we all will. Well, I'll be going along. . . . Mary doesn't like to be kept waiting. (*He rises.*) I'll stop by again tomorrow and see if a letter's come.

BILLY.

All right, Mr. Edwards. Good night.

EDWARDS.

Good night, Billy. (*He opens door R. to exit, and then suddenly stops.*)

LINCOLN'S VOICE.

(*Wearily.*) 'Evening, Ninian. . . . (*He enters.*)
'Evening, Billy. . . . (*He crosses, with dragging foot-
steps, to his chair. He looks haggard and gaunt, and his
shoulders droop wearily. He sits and stares moodily at
the floor.*)

BILLY.

Mr. Lincoln!—Glad you're back!

EDWARDS.

How are you, Abe?

BILLY.

I been keeping the office open—been doing what I could
to keep things straight.

LINCOLN.

That's good, Billy . . . thank you. . . .

EDWARDS.

(*Suddenly going to him.*) You're sick, Abe!

LINCOLN.

I'm not feeling so well, Ninian.

BILLY.

Here, Mr. Lincoln, better take some of this. (*He goes
to LINCOLN'S desk and from a drawer he takes a medicine
bottle and spoon. He pours a stiff dose.*) Down this;
do you good.

LINCOLN.

Well, it can't make me any worse, Billy. . . . Thank
you. . . . (*He takes the spoon, and swallows the medi-
cine. Then he examines the label of the bottle.*)

EDWARDS.

What's the matter with you, Abe?

LINCOLN.

According to the label nothing this medicine won't cure.

EDWARDS.

I'm serious, Abe!

LINCOLN.

So am I, Ninian, and I don't know. Nothing much, I reckon. . . .

EDWARDS.

Take off that muffler and coat and sit over here by the fire. . . .

(LINCOLN *removes muffler and overcoat, throws them on the couch, and crosses to chair C.*)

LINCOLN.

It was cold walking from New Salem.

EDWARDS.

(*Astonished.*) You walked from New Salem—thirty miles?

LINCOLN.

Yes.

EDWARDS.

You must be dog tired!

LINCOLN.

I'm all right. Billy, you might as well go along home to bed; it's getting on to be late.

BILLY.

I'd rather stay here in the office with you, Mr. Lincoln.

LINCOLN.

I'm not going to stay long. Go on home, Billy. Tomorrow we can get down to business again.

BILLY.

(*Reluctantly.*) Very well, Mr. Lincoln, just as you say. Good night. Good night, Mr. Edwards. (*He goes up and takes his hat and coat from peg.*)

EDWARDS.

Good night, Billy.

LINCOLN.

Good night, Billy.

[BILLY *exits*, door R.]

EDWARDS.

He's been mighty faithful since you've . . . been away, Abe. He's been keeping clear of the taverns and running the office as well as he knew how.

LINCOLN.

Billy's a good boy. (*He rises and goes up to window, opens shutters, and looks out.*)

EDWARDS.

(*After a pause.*) It's a fine night.

LINCOLN.

Yes, a fine night. . . . I didn't notice much . . . coming back from New Salem. . . .

EDWARDS.

Were you there long?

LINCOLN.

Only one day. I went to see old Bowling Green.

EDWARDS.

How is he, Abe?

LINCOLN.

(*Quietly.*) He's dead. . . .

EDWARDS.

Dead? . . .

LINCOLN.

I got there this morning . . . just in time for his funeral. . . . One of the best friends I ever had was Bowling. . . . They asked me to speak over the coffin, and I got up and stood by it, and was going to say something . . . and found I couldn't say a word. . . . In-

stead, I cried. . . . (*A pause.*) And I visited a grave there in New Salem . . . an old grave . . . I stood by it a long time. . . . (*He stands, looking out of the window.*)

EDWARDS.

I understand, Abe. . . .

LINCOLN.

I know you do, Ninian, and I'm grateful. . . .

(*A knock at door R. It instantly opens and MARY is standing there.*)

MARY.

(*Sharply.*) Ninian, I've been waiting — (*She sees LINCOLN, and stops . . . stone-still.*)

LINCOLN.

(*They face each other. A pause. Softly.*) Mary . . .

MARY.

(*Turning abruptly to go out.*) Please hurry, Ninian —

LINCOLN.

(*Going to her quickly.*) No, Mary, don't go! I—I want to—talk to you.

EDWARDS.

I'll—wait for you downstairs, Mary.

LINCOLN.

Thank you, Ninian. . . . [EDWARDS *exits*.

MARY.

(*Not facing him. Coolly.*) Well, Mr. Lincoln?

LINCOLN.

I'm glad you came, Mary. I was aiming on coming to see you as soon as Ninian had left. I—I have something to say to you. . . . (*She makes no reply.*) Can you—can you think what it might be?

MARY.

I've not thought much, Mr. Lincoln, since . . . that day . . .

LINCOLN.

(*Turning, going L.*) I'll tell you why I want to talk to you, Mary. I want to ask you something—something which I know I have no *right* to ask, but I—I—— (*Suddenly turning.*) Mary, will you take me back? (*She goes up to window. He follows.*) I know it's something no man has a right to expect of a woman whom he's treated as I've treated you.

(*A long pause, then . . .*)

MARY.

(*Coolly.*) I don't see why you say that. A woman might forgive a man most anything . . . if she loved him enough.

LINCOLN.

Do you mean . . . do you . . .

MARY.

(*Turning on him.*) I love you, Abe; I'm not ashamed to tell you so—why should I be?—I love you, and I want to be with you, rising as you rise; I want to be with you to guide you and comfort you—and if you lose the way, to show you the path again. . . .

LINCOLN.

(*Deeply sincere.*) I need you, Mary, to do just those things. I know I do. I know it now.

(*She looks up at him. Then, suddenly . . .*)

MARY.

(*With a little, choked cry.*) Oh, Abe—Abe!

(*He quickly takes her in his arms. They stand together in front of the window, he towering above her. There is a pause, then LINCOLN turns and looks out the window.*)

LINCOLN.

Mary . . .

MARY.

Yes, Abe?

LINCOLN.

Do you remember, a long time ago, those voices you said you heard . . . calling my name . . . and I said I'd never heard them, and kind of laughed at you because you said you had?

MARY.

Yes, I remember. . . .

LINCOLN.

I've been wandering alone on the prairie for weeks, Mary, and . . . I've heard 'em. Maybe it was my imagination, or the fever. . . . Or maybe it was my own conscience. Or maybe . . . maybe it was God talking to me. . . . But I heard the voices . . . I'm sure I heard the voices . . .

MARY.

(*Looking up at him.*) Yes, Abe? . . .

LINCOLN.

I'll answer 'em, Mary. . . .

(*She looks at him a moment, then puts her head on his breast and holds him tightly. LINCOLN presses her against him. They both are looking out the window, and there is a pause . . . and . . .*)

THE CURTAIN FALLS

PRODUCTION NOTES

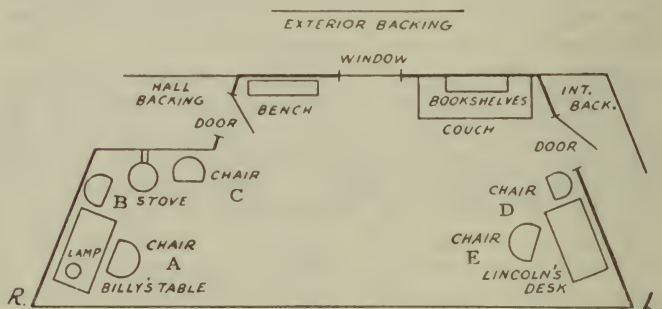
THE SETTING

The law office of Stuart and Lincoln, 4 Hoffman's Row, upstairs, directly over the courtroom, in Springfield, Illinois. The room is a high one, and quite bare of anything like luxurious furnishings. In the corner up R. there is a good-sized jog, with the door which leads to the staircase facing the L. (See Stage Diagram.) Against the front wall of the jog, facing the audience, a small, pot-bellied stove is set, and beside it, to its left, a wooden armchair. There is a door in the L. wall, a little up L., which leads to a staircase which, in turn, goes down to the courtroom below. In the center of the back wall there is a tall, narrow, small-paned window, equipped with folding wooden shutters. These need not be practical, but it would add effectiveness to have them so. Down R. is a plain table, and on it an old oil-burning lamp with a green shade. There is a wooden chair at the table. Above the table, against the wall, is another wooden chair. Then there is the stove with a coal hod to the right of it. A long pipe runs from the stove up the wall. Then the chair to the left of the stove. To the right of the window, against the back wall, there is a straight-backed bench, and above the bench, a row of hat pegs. Then the window. At the left of the window, on the wall, a rickety three-shelf bookcase, piled with darkly bound law books. Under the bookcase, against the wall, an old couch. Down L., against the wall, there is a large roll-top desk and a desk chair. Another chair is against the wall above the desk. Over the table, at the R., is an old octagonal clock. There is some wood panelling around the window and the doors, but the rest of the wall is plaster and painted some nondescript color. It is a typical old office, dark and none too clean, but with a pleasing atmosphere all the same. There may be one or

two old carpets on the floor, and a calendar or some old political posters on the walls, but these latter are better omitted unless they can be in keeping with the times.

There is no actual change of set in Scene 3, Act II. Lincoln merely steps before the curtain, and is held during his speech by one or two spotlights. When he finishes, the spotlights black out, Lincoln leaves the stage, the stage lights come up, and the Curtain opens on the set.

STAGE DIAGRAM



ESSENTIAL PERSONAL PROPERTIES

ACT I, SCENE I

BILLY. Hammer, black tin sign (on door), papers and pamphlets.

STUART. Handkerchief, dictionary (on desk).

RIP. Large, blue bandanna handkerchief.

LINCOLN. Pen (on table).

SCENE 2

LINCOLN. Paper and pen.

BILLY. Writing materials on table, legal papers, newspaper.

ACT II, SCENE I

FRANCES. Handkerchief.

MARY. Newspaper.

BILLY. Writing materials, book (on shelf).

LINCOLN. Papers (in hat), ledger (on desk), newspaper (MARY'S).

ELDRED. RIP's blue bandanna handkerchief.

SCENE 4

SPEED. Two silver dollars.

LINCOLN. One dollar bill.

ELDRED. Paper money.

ACT III, SCENE I

ELLIOT. Large, flat parcel (silver tray), letter (in pocket).

BILLY. Large, square bundle (clock).

SPEED. Watch, slip of paper.

SCENE 2

BILLY. Book (on shelf), medicine bottle and spoon (in desk).

COSTUMES

The costumes of the men do not vary greatly. Billy, Stuart, Edwards, Elliot and Eldred all wear practically the same style clothing. It differs only in quality and richness. A dark frock coat, fancy vest, ruffled shirt, high collar and black or colored tie, light trousers strapped under the shoes, and patent leather shoes of the elastic-sided type, are the general thing. Stuart, Edwards and Eldred are all elegantly dressed, in contrasting colors.

Billy and Elliot are in the same style, but wear darker, more conservative clothes. They all wear beavers, and Stuart, Edwards and Eldred may carry walking sticks. Those who appear in Act III should wear overcoats if they can be obtained. In Scene 1 of Act III the script calls for a complete change of costume. This is not necessary. However, if a different vest or tie can be worn it will suggest the change.

Old Rip is dressed in worn, dark trousers, held up by one suspender, calico shirt, open at the throat, old short coat, and battered felt hat. A large bandanna handkerchief is an important part of his attire. He may wear heavy boots or old unpolished shoes.

Joshua Speed, when he first appears, is dressed somewhat as Rip is, but a bit more carefully. He wears nondescript clothes. However, in Act III, when he appears ready for the wedding, he should be dressed in the same style as Billy and Elliot. As he will easily be able to procure the clothes he wears first, he will be required to have only one hired costume.

Lincoln wears the traditional Lincoln garb. Long black coat, trousers and vest, plain white shirt with turned down collar and black string tie. He should wear elastic-sided shoes, not too highly polished. In the beginning, he wears his top hat; in the last act, he should wear that, and also a long black overcoat, and a woolen muffler.

The women, too, are dressed practically the same all the way through the play. Bessie Armstrong is severely dressed in black. Her daughter, Matilda, is attired in frilly, fancy clothes.

Elizabeth, Frances and Mary are dressed quietly, but richly. In the beginning they carry parasols, in the last act, muffs.

Some of these costumes may be made up from garments found in the attic. However, if this can't be done, complete costumes for both men and women may be obtained from The Hooker-Howe Costume Company of Haverhill, Mass., The Eaves Costume Company in New York City or The Hayden Costume Company, 786 Washington Street, Boston, Mass.

DIALECTS

There has been no attempt in this play to write character dialect. The characters should speak with a mid-Western accent, but not being familiar with it, I have avoided trying to write it into the dialogue. If the actors are not trained in this dialect it would be much better for them to strive for good, standard American speech, rather than confuse the audience with a variety of accents. However, to get the effect, they may speak a bit carelessly, substituting "an'" for "and," "o'" for "of," and "ain't" for "aren't." Also, emphasis of the first syllable in such words as "pernickety," "respected," "persistence," will help suggest the dialect. For example: '*per*nickety," "*re*spected," "*per*sistence." The only women who would do this are probably Mrs. Armstrong and Matilda.

FACTS REGARDING THE PLAY

The main events in this play are, for the most part, in chronological order, although they have been telescoped to allow for a more rapid passing of time. Actually, the events in the play from the beginning (Lincoln's arrival in Springfield) to the end (his marriage to Mary Todd), covered a period of five years (1837-1842). The play covers about a year and a half or two years. The following will be of some help in determining what, in the play, is fact and what is fiction, and where fact is not strictly accurate.

ACT I, SCENE I

The character of Stuart in the play is not the character of Stuart the man. Stuart, in life, was quite young, handsome, well liked, and gay.

SCENE 2

The letter to Mary Owens, which Lincoln reads to Billy, is a combination of two letters he wrote her, one

within a few months of the other. The first was written in May, 1837, and the second in August of the same year.

Actually Lincoln did not meet Mary Todd in the same year he came to Springfield, although she was there on a visit at that time. He met her in 1840, three years after his arrival. He probably saw her first in Ninian Edwards' home.

Elijah P. Lovejoy, Billy's ideal, was killed in 1839, two years after the event occurs in the play, and one year before Lincoln actually met Mary Todd.

ACT II, SCENE I

The editorial which Lincoln reads to Billy, supposedly from the "Sangamo Journal," actually appeared in the "State Register," the Democratic newspaper in Springfield, in 1839.

According to the authority of Dr. Raymond E. Senecal of New Bedford, Mass., all the details of Rip's illness and of the operation performed by Elliot are accurate, and would have been perfectly possible at that time. The operation is a Trephine Operation, and its purpose is to relieve pressure on the brain caused originally by a blow on the skull, and aggravated by another blow at a later time. However, this operation was not widely performed at that time, and only a daring doctor would attempt it.

SCENE 2

Potter Eldred's speech sounds exaggerated and melodramatic. It is patterned, however, after the oratory of the times. (It will be noted that the speech is given off stage, and thus the actor may read it.)

SCENE 3

The speech which Lincoln delivers in the courtroom is partially composed of an actual address he made to the "Young Men's Lyceum" at Springfield, a little time before he went there to live. His own words run from "In Mississippi they first commenced . . ." to ". . . hang some of them by the very same mistake."

ACT III, SCENE I

This scene is reasonably authentic in content, except for the fact that Lincoln did not go away directly after his failure to appear at his wedding, but stayed on in Springfield for some weeks and sat with the Legislature. However, he did leave Springfield later, and went to Kentucky, where he spent some time with Joshua Speed.

SCENE 2

More than "many weeks" elapsed before Lincoln returned to finally marry Mary Todd. It was about two years.

The play would indicate that Lincoln's return to Mary symbolizes the acceptance of his destiny. Perhaps this was true, probably it was not. However, for the purposes of the play, we shall suppose that it was a fact.

BOOKS USED FOR REFERENCE

The following books were used in the gathering of facts and material for the writing of this play:

ABRAHAM LINCOLN: THE PRAIRIE YEARS, by Carl Sandburg.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN, by Lord Charnwood.

MRS. ABRAHAM LINCOLN, by W. A. Evans.

LINCOLN TALKS, by Emanuel Hertz.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN, by William E. Barton.

THE WOMEN LINCOLN LOVED, by William E. Barton.



